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OF
ESSAYS AND TRACTS
IN
THEOLOGY.

BY JARED SPARKS.

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BLACKBURNE

ON

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.

ARCHDEACON BLACKBURNE.

FEW persons have written with more ability, or engaged with a warmer zeal, in the cause of religious liberty, than FRANCIS BLACKBURNE, Archdeacon of Cleveland. His long and active life was passed within the pale of the established Church of England, but his liberal spirit and comprehensive charity were restrained by no barriers, either of forms or names. The right, which he had exercised in choosing his own mode of worship, he cheerfully granted to others. With him the Bible was the only proper formulary of faith, and the true christian church was the whole body of sincere believers and faithful followers of Jesus.

He was born at Richmond, Yorkshire, 1705 ; and, after a preparatory course of classical education in the neighbouring schools, he entered the university of Cambridge, 1722, as a pensioner of Catherine hall. He remained at the university five years, during which period he took his bachelor's degree, and at the expiration of which he was ordained a deacon in the church. He had already gained a high repu-

tation for his attainments and devotedness to study ; but, being disappointed in his expectation of a fellowship, by reason of the sentiments, which he had openly avowed, concerning church power and civil liberty, he left the university and lived nearly ten years in retirement with his uncle in Yorkshire.

He had early acquired a fondness for the writings of Locke, Hoadly, and others of the same character, who were distinguished for the freedom and power with which they spoke of a general toleration and religious liberty. The sentiments derived from these sources were strengthened by his own vigorous understanding, and confirmed by a course of reading, in which he was soon afterwards accidentally engaged. Several volumes of the old Puritans fell into his hands, which he perused with eagerness. He admired the independent principles of these writers, their plainness of manner, their simplicity, and unaffected piety. The spirit, which he imbibed from works of the above description, gave a tone to his future character, and was the groundwork of that toleration and love of liberty, which he ever after manifested.

In the year 1739, he was settled as a clergyman in Richmond, his native place ; and eleven years after, he was appointed archdeacon of Cleveland by the archbishop of York. His residence was always at Richmond. At no distant date from his first settlement he commenced his labours as an author, and, as would be natural to expect, was soon drawn into

the field of controversy. A translation of Erasmus's preface to his paraphrase of Matthew was made at his request, and one of his first publications was a discourse prefixed to this translation. The tendency of this discourse was rather practical, than controversial, and was chiefly designed as a preservative against the influence of popery, and an encouragement to study the Scriptures.

The two or three succeeding pieces, which he published, were chiefly aimed at the abuses of church power, faults of discipline, errors of systematic forms of worship and faith, impropriety of certain ceremonies, and, in short, all the ecclesiastical encroachments, which had grown bold and strong with time, and all the unmeaning and cumbersome additions to the original church of Christ, which ignorance had invented and custom sanctioned. On these subjects he took the Bible for his guide, and did not hesitate to follow his principles to their proper consequences.

His next subject of controversy was the intermediate state of the soul. Bishop Law, in the Appendix to his Theory of Religion, had defended the doctrine of the unconscious being of the soul between death and the resurrection. This appendix was attacked with vehemence. Blackburne defended it, and attempted to show, that the Scriptures afford no proof of an intermediate state of happiness or misery. The controversy was protracted, and Blackburne came forward several times to meet the arguments of his

opponents. In the progress of the discussion, he published remarks on certain passages in Warburton's *Divine Legation*, and on the account given by that writer of the opinions of the Jews concerning the soul. He at last wrote a historical view of the whole controversy.

But the work, which has gained him greater celebrity than any other, is "*The Confessional*; or a full and free Inquiry into the Right, Utility, Edification, and Success of establishing systematical Confessions of Faith and Doctrine in Protestant Churches." This was published in 1766, and passed through three editions in four years. Its object is well expressed in the title. The author first traces the history of Confessions of Faith in protestant churches; he next considers the right to establish them as tests of orthodoxy; and then examines their expedience and utility. This branch of the inquiry occupies the three first chapters, and these constitute the portion, which has been selected for the present work. They embrace a distinct topic, and contain the clearest views and best reasoning, perhaps, which can be found within the same compass, on the subjects of which they profess to treat.

These three chapters do not make more than one fifth of *The Confessional*, but the remainder, although written with equal learning and ability, has a particular and exclusive bearing on the English church. It goes into a full and ingenuous examination of the va-

rious opinions, which have prevailed respecting the terms of subscription to the articles, and searches for the reasonings and casuistry by which it came to pass, that they were conscientiously subscribed in different senses. This investigation is pursued with much acuteness, and with no little severity against the modes by which the consciences of some churchmen had been satisfied.

This work was the beginning of a controversy, which sent many publications into the world, and did not terminate for several years. The following is the language of the author in his preface to the second edition.

“The favourable reception, which The Confessional hath met with from the public, though it will not be admitted as an argument of the merit of the book, is undeniably an argument of something of much more consequence. It is an argument, that the love of *religious liberty* is still warm and vigorous in the hearts of a considerable number of the good people of England, notwithstanding the various endeavours of interested and irreligious men, in these latter as well as in former times, to check and discourage it; and notwithstanding the desponding apprehensions of some good men, that these stiffers had well nigh succeeded in their unrighteous attempts.”

“The Confessional hath likewise had the good fortune to make another valuable discovery; namely, that encroachments on religious liberty in protestant

communities, by whatever specious pretences they are introduced, can never be defended upon protestant principles."

A little before this period he expressed corresponding sentiments in a memoir of his own life. Mr. Theophilus Lindsey had married his step-daughter, and he writes on the occasion as follows. "The friendship between Mr. Lindsey and Mr. Blackburne was not nearly so much cemented by this family connexion, as by a similarity of sentiment in the cause of christian liberty, and their aversion to ecclesiastical imposition in matters of conscience. In the warfare on these subjects they went hand in hand."

About the same time that the Confessional was published, a vacancy happened in the congregation of dissenters at the Old Jewry, London, by the death of their pastor, Dr. Chandler. From the sentiments, which Blackburne was known to entertain, it was thought by some persons, that he might be induced to leave the established church, and accept an invitation to take charge of this society. The proposal was encouraged by some of the friends of the archdeacon, and he was consulted; but, for reasons which satisfied both parties, he declined the offer.

Blackburne's opposition to the established church, and his continuance in it, have been considered an anomaly not easily to be explained. It is certain,

however, that he explained it satisfactorily to his own conscience. Nor will it admit a reasonable surmise, that he was actuated by motives of interest. Had he been ambitious of power and influence, these possessions, with his commanding talents, would have been much more within his reach among the dissenters. That to improve his fortune was not his purpose is most evident ; for he absolutely refused preferment in the church, which required a renewal of his subscription ; and the income at the Old Jewry, which he declined accepting, was nearly three times as large, as that which he received at Richmond. We have no need to inquire by what process he reconciled himself to a church, whose forms and government in his opinion were so defective ; it is enough to know, that the whole tenour of his life proved him to be a man of high and unwavering integrity, that he acted from principles of conscience, and that whatever course he pursued he believed it to be right.

It was one of Blackburne's projects to write a life of Martin Luther, after the manner of Jortin's Life of Erasmus. Materials to a considerable extent were collected for prosecuting this excellent plan, but the work was never commenced. It seems to have been set aside for a time by the labour of compiling two weighty quartos, as a memoir of his worthy friend, Thomas Hollis. His eyesight failed soon after, and the burden of years

pressed too heavily to allow him to engage in an undertaking, which required not more the experience of manhood, than the vigour and enterprise of youth. He died on the 7th of August, 1787, in the eighty-third year of his age. His works have since been collected and published by his own son in several volumes.

In private life Blackburne was amiable and kind, affectionate to his family, dignified in his manners, and warm in his friendships. He was an earnest and persuasive preacher, and assiduous in his public as well as private duties. By a rigid temperance and good natural constitution, his health was preserved through a long and studious life, which he devoted to the cause of virtue and liberty. His compositions discover a strong and well cultivated intellect; they are animated and forcible; they seldom fail to exhibit a lucid train of thought, and marks of a discriminating judgment. The warmth of controversy may sometimes be perceived, but it is the warmth of sincerity, of conviction and argument, and not the consuming fire of passion, nor the corroding heat of ill nature. In his numerous writings on theology, morals, and politics, no traits of the author's character are more conspicuous, than his independence and firmness, his love of truth and sense of duty.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.



CHAP. I.

Rise, Progress, and Success of established Confessions of Faith in Protestant Churches.

WHEN the Protestants first withdrew from the communion of the Church of Rome, the principles they went upon were such as these.

“JESUS CHRIST hath, by his Gospel, called all men unto liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and restored them to the privilege of working out their own salvation by their own understandings and endeavours. For this work of salvation sufficient means are afforded in the holy Scriptures, without having recourse to the doctrines and commandments of men. In these Scriptures all things needful for spiritual living and man’s soul’s health are mentioned and showed. Consequently, faith and conscience,

having no dependence upon man's laws, are not to be compelled by man's authority; and none other hath the Church of Rome to show for the spiritual dominion she claimeth. 'The church of Christ is congregated by the word of God, and not by man's law; nor are the king's laws any farther to be obeyed, than they agree with the law of God.'

Private Christians being thus left at liberty, by the original principles of the Reformation, to search the Scriptures for the grounds of their religion, and to build their faith on this foundation *only*, a very moderate share of sagacity would enable the leading Reformers to foresee, that diversity of opinions concerning many points of doctrine would be unavoidable; and that from hence frequent occasions of offence would arise among themselves, not without some advantage to the common adversary.

Whether they might not, in a good measure, have prevented any very ill consequences of this liberty without departing from the simplicity of the scripture plan; that is to say, whether they might not have kept the terms of communion sufficiently open for pious and reasonable Christians of very different opinions to have complied with them, without abridging their christian liberty, or doing violence to their consciences, cannot now be determined. Certain it is, that such an experiment was never tried, nor perhaps ever thought of, till the distemper was gone too far to be cured.

Instead of making this experiment, the Reformers, having unhappily adopted certain maxims as self-evident, namely, that "there could be no edification in religious society without uniformity of opinion," that "the true sense of Scripture could be but *one*,"* and the like, presently fell upon the expedient of *preventing* diversity of opinions, by contracting their original plan in agreement with these maxims. The *one* sense of Scripture was determined to be the sense of the primitive church, that is to say, the sense of the orthodox Fathers for a certain number of centuries. From these they took their interpretations of Scripture, and upon these they formed their rule of faith and doctrine, and so reduced their respective churches within the bounds of a theological system. The consequence of which was, that every opinion deviating from this system, whatever countenance or support it might have from a different sense of Scripture, became a declared heresy.

Hence it came to pass that many Protestants of very different characters and tempers, finding these encroachments on their christian liberty, and themselves not only excluded from communion with their brethren, but stigmatized with an invidious name, were provoked to separate from their leaders, and set up for themselves ; which many of them did on

* See Mosheim's Compend. View of Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 159, and Maclaine's note [a].

grounds sufficiently justifiable ; whilst others, whose pride, passion, and self conceit knew no bounds, and whom probably the most reasonable terms of communion would not have restrained, under the pretence of asserting their liberty against these dogmatical chiefs, formed themselves into sects, which afterwards made the most infamous use of it.

That some of these sects were scandals to all religion, and nuisances to all civil society, was but too visible. That they were the offspring of the Reformation, was not to be denied. The doctrines which afterwards distinguished the sober and serious protestant churches, were not yet made public, nor perhaps perfectly settled. They were yet only to be found in the writings of some private doctor, whom his brethren were at liberty to disown, or in catechisms for youth, or directories for ministers within their several departments. A concurrence of unhappy circumstances, which afforded the Papists a most favourable opportunity of calumniating the whole Protestant body as the maintainers of every heresy, and the abettors of every sedition, which Europe had heard of or seen in that generation.

It was to no purpose that these hotheaded irregulars were disowned, and their doctrines reprobated, by some of those eminent doctors, on whom the credit and success of the Reformation seemed chiefly to depend. These might speak their own sense ; but it did not appear by what authority they undertook to

answer for the whole body. The nature of the case called for such apologies as these, that their defection from Rome might not fall under a general odium; and it might still be true that all Protestants thought in their hearts, what these indiscreet sectaries spoke out. A suspicion which was not a little confirmed by the leading principle of the most outrageous Anabaptists, which was expressed in the very words of Luther himself.*

These circumstances laid the Protestants under a necessity of publishing to the whole world explicit confessions of their faith and doctrine, authenticated by formal attestations of the leading members of their respective churches. That of the protestant Princes of Germany led the way; being solemnly tendered to the Emperor Charles V. in the diet held at Ausburg in the year 1530. This precedent other protestant states and churches thought fit to follow on different occasions; and by this means acquitted themselves, at least among all equitable judges, of the scandal of abetting the schismatical and seditious enthusiasts, who about that time infested different countries under the pretence of promoting reformation.†

* A christian man is master of every thing. See Bayle's Dictionary, art. Anabaptists, rem. [A].

† [It must be remembered, however, that the protestant principles of the sufficiency of revelation, and the right of private judgment, were objected to by the Papists at the very outset of the Reformation. It was argued by the Catholics, that a unity of

These confessions, being laid before the public with this formality, very soon became of more importance than just to serve a present turn. They were solemnly subscribed by the leading men of the several communions on whose behalf they were exhibited, as doctrines by which they would live and die; and were consequently to be defended at all events. And, therefore, to secure the reputation of their uniformity to all succeeding times, an unfeigned assent to the public confession, confirmed either by sub-

faith was absolutely essential to a true church, and that the liberty allowed by Protestants would destroy this unity by introducing a variety of opinions. So often was this position repeated, and so strongly urged, that some of the protestants, who had not yet acquired sufficient confidence in their own principles, conceived that it would be the best mode of preserving a true church, and silencing their adversaries, to fix on a public form of faith. It follows that they were prompted to adopt the maxims, of which the author justly complains above, and to sanction Confessions of Faith, as much from timidity and unwise caution, as from the abuses of enthusiasts and schismatics.

Instead of resorting to this expedient to keep up a true church, and remove the objections of their adversaries, a proper argument would have been, that a unity of faith is not enjoined in the Scriptures, that it did not exist among the first disciples, that peace and love are the bonds of Christians, that no such unity has been known in the Roman Catholic Church itself, but, on the contrary, this church has been the theatre of perpetual divisions and controversies; and last of all, that such a unity is not consistent with the laws and conditions of human nature. If they had kept to this ground, they might have maintained the spirit and purity of the Gospel, without imposing shackles on liberty and conscience by constructing and prescribing artificial rules of faith. EDITOR.]

scription or a solemn oath, became, in most of the protestant churches, an indispensable condition of qualifying their pastors for the ministry, and, in some, of admitting their laymembers to church communion.

But this expedient, intended to prevent division in particular societies, unhappily proved the means of embroiling different churches one with another, to a very unedifying degree. Some of these confessions, in their zeal to stigmatize the heresies of the most obnoxious sectaries, had made use of terms which no less reprobated the doctrines of their orthodox brethren; the immediate consequence of which was, that several controversies which had arisen among the respective leaders of the Reformation at the beginning, and had been partly composed, and partly suspended, in regard to their common interest, were now revived, not without much heat and bitterness.

On this incident, the Papists changed their method of attack, and readily took this occasion not only to insult the Reformed on their want of unity, but to turn many doctrines to their own account, which particular men had advanced in conformity to their own confessions.*

* "The Lutherans and Calvinists," says a very competent judge, "by cherishing some errors of their respective principals, were altogether hindered from rightly answering the Papists." See *Phoenix*, vol. ii. p. 315. At length arose the immortal Chillingworth, who disclaimed the defence of the protestant religion, as it lay in systems and confessions, and appealed to the Bible

Against these objections the Protestants had a variety of defences, some of which, it must be owned, had more strength as they were applied to the Papists, than merit in themselves. They said, that “a want of unity was no greater reproach to them from the Papists, than it was to the primitive church from the Jews and Heathens, and that the same apologies would serve in both cases.” They

only. By this means many cavils were cut off at once, and many confessions of systematical doctors rendered of no use to the Papists at all; who, being well aware of the advantages the Popish cause would lose by this expedient, were accordingly extremely provoked at it. They called it a *novelty*, which the Protestants in general would not approve. And it appeared, in the event, that they were not *totally* mistaken. For the application of this rule by a liberal-spirited English Prelate on a certain occasion, put another English Prelate [bishop Hare] extremely out of humour; a Prelate who, when the force of *episcopal* prejudice was out of the way, had ridiculed systematical attachments in a much admired irony, which however owed all its beauty and all its force to this very principle of Chillingworth. Mr Desmaizeaux (Chillingworth’s biographer) thought it necessary to exculpate Chillingworth from this popish charge of *novelty*, and, as it seems to me, has succeeded very ill. He says, “All Protestants had declared in their confessions, or articles of religion, that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith by which those confessions themselves are to be tried.” But the question was not, what *all* Protestants had *declared*, but whether *any* protestant church had *acted* conformably to that declaration, and ventured to defend the protestant religion on scripture principles, even at the expense (if so it should fall out) of its own established confession? His answer to bishop Hare’s peevishness is much better. *Life of Mr Chillingworth*, p. 169, and 198.

might have added, that divisions in the Christian church had been for the most part occasioned and fomented by the peremptory decisions and intolerant spirit of those particular doctors, who happened to have the lead for the time being. But this, being too much the case of the Protestants themselves, was not to be insisted on. Some advantage, indeed, they had in the way of recrimination; but here the Papists found the means to parry the blow; alleging, what indeed was very true, that the most considerable of the points in dispute among them had never been decided *e cathedra*, and so were left open to amicable debate without breach of unity; whereas the doctrines controverted among Protestants were solemnly established in their several confessions, and the confessions themselves ratified by oaths, subscriptions, &c. and the belief of them thereby made an indispensable condition of communion.*

* Thus, with respect to the famous five points concerning which the synod of Dort was so untractable, the disputes in the church of Rome were bitter enough; but then, "the council of Trent had drawn up her decrees, on these heads, with a *neutrality* which pleased all, and disobligened none." *Heylin's Quinquarticular Hist.* p. 26. Grotius made use of this circumstance in pleading with the magistrates of Amsterdam for a toleration of the Remonstrants. "The doctrines disputed in Holland," said he, "have not been decided by the church of Rome, though she is extremely fond of decisions." *Abridgment of Brandl's History of the Reformation, &c. by La Roche*, p. 344.

After much mortifying litigation concerning this want of unity among Protestants, it so happened that the Belgic and Gallican churches, in the name of themselves and their orthodox sister churches, thought fit to deny the fact; and, in the year 1581, exhibited what they called *A Harmony of the Confessions* of no less than eleven protestant churches, which they intended as an ample testimony of the unanimity of Protestants in their principal doctrines, and a full and satisfactory confutation of the popish calumnies on this head.

This work, however, was not equally approved of by all the churches, whose confessions it harmonized. It was even affronted by the church of England;* for, being translated into English in the year 1586, Archbishop Whitgift, who at that time had the control of the press, would not allow it to be printed in London, and employed his authority likewise to have it suppressed in other places.†

* The English confession, exhibited in this Harmony, consisted of extracts from Bishop Jewel's Apology; a book, in those days, of equal authority with our thirty-nine articles. *Strype's Annals*, vol. i. chap. xxv.—xxvii. and *Life of Parker*, p. 179.

† The Harmony was, however, printed at Cambridge that year, notwithstanding Whitgift's express prohibition. *Strype*, u. s. vol. iii. b. ii. ch. 8. Mr Strype has not informed us why the Archbishop disallowed the Harmony; but the Belgic and Gallican churches having expressed notions of church government, ceremonies, &c. in some short observations at the end of the book, not very favourable to Whitgift's principles, his Grace's distaste for the work is not wholly unaccountable.

There were, indeed, some considerations naturally suggested by the manner in which this work was executed, that would greatly obstruct the good effects expected from it, whether with respect to composing differences among Protestants, or obviating the reproaches of the common adversary.

1. In the first place, the compilers made no mention of the confessions or doctrines of any Protestants, who dissented from the public forms, in those countries where the reformed religion had gained an establishment. They were indeed hardly charitable to such dissenters; censuring with particular severity the authors of the Book of Concord, which had appeared about this time.*

* And indeed not without reason, if these censures could have been passed consistently with their design of exemplifying the *Harmony* subsisting among Protestants. By this Book of Concord, the work of some rigid Lutherans, all those churches were excluded from christian communion, who would not subscribe it. For which schismatical presumption, the reformed divines of the Low Countries expostulated sharply with these authors, alleging the scandal and mischief of such peremptory decisions, seeing that the Lutherans and Calvinists differed only about two articles, the Lord's supper, and the two natures of Christ. Blondel indeed observes, "that they differed about two articles more, viz. "predestination and grace; yet, believing these to be of *no importance*, they [the Low Country divines] made no mention of them." *La Roche*, u. s. p. 197. Would these divines have believed a prophet, who should have foretold, that their successors, in the space of forty years, would certainly treat all, who differed from them in these two articles of *no importance*, just as the authors of the *Concord* had treated themselves for differing with them on the other two? Mr La Roche has given a pretty long extract of this

2. All the world knew very well, that not one of these eleven churches would allow any man to minister in it, and hardly perhaps to communicate with it, who should refuse to subscribe the confession of that church, even though he should offer to subscribe or swear to every other system in the collection.

3. The *short observations* at the end of the *Harmony*, the design of which appears to have been to accommodate the awkward expressions in some of these confessions to the orthodox sense of the Belgic and Gallican churches (a liberty, which the harmonizers seem to have taken without any sort of commission,) plainly show, that some of these churches were at too great a distance from each other to be reconciled by any such equivocal expedients.

If the reader would know what was the reputation of these public confessions in other respects, he may be referred to a *Lamentation*, which appeared about thirty years after the publication of this *Harmony*, setting forth, "That these confessions were read by few; that they were hardly to be found in booksellers' shops; that men rather chose to provide themselves with the writings of private doctors, and to determine religious matters by any other testimonies, rather than these public forms."

Remonstrance of the Low Country divines, and says, *he inserts it with pleasure, because it is very glorious to those divines*. But to have perfectly achieved this glory for them, he should have suppressed his account of their persecuting Hubert Duifhuis, because he and his party refused to subscribe *their Book of Concord*. See p. 194, 203, 207.

This complaint is taken from the preface to the *Corpus Confessionum*, printed at Geneva, 1612; the design of which work was to revive the credit of these established formularies, and to recommend them as “authentic tables and standards of the old and primitive faith.” For this purpose the confessions of sixteen different churches are here exhibited, not in detached and selected portions, as in the Harmony, but whole and entire, as they were published and acknowledged by the churches to which they respectively belonged.*

But though the professed design of this *Body of Confessions* was to accommodate divines and students in theology with a commodious and comprehensive view of the whole doctrine of the reformed churches, yet was not the expedient of harmonizing their several confessions quite overlooked. But finding, it is likely, that the method taken in the old Harmony was justly exceptionable, these editors contented themselves with referring their readers to a kind of

* This, however, the famous Peter Heylin, disputing for his doctor's degree at Oxford, 1633, denied to be true; alleging on the part of the church of England, that the first clause of her twentieth article, concerning Church Authority, was, in this collection, feloniously secreted; appealing to another edition of the Articles, which was on that occasion fetched from a neighbouring bookseller's, and in which the aforesaid clause stood fair and legible *Vernon's Life of Heylin*, p. 58—61. See the editors of the *Corpus Confessionum* well vindicated, in *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty-nine Articles, &c.* printed for Francklin, 1724, *Introduction*, p. 22.

Synopsis, where the agreement or harmony of particular churches on different articles is exhibited, without attempting to reconcile them on those articles, concerning which they did not appear to be unanimous.

In this Synopsis two things are more especially remarkable.

1. On the article of *Justification* and *Faith*, which is the fifth in this Index, the editors observe, that "All the confessions of the [protestant] churches teach this primary article of the christian religion with a most holy consent."* Does not this note, with which this article alone is honoured, seem to imply a consciousness in the editors, that this was the single article, in which *all* these confessions *did* agree?

2. According to this Synopsis, there is a dead silence in many, sometimes in the majority, of these confessions, concerning some of the fundamental articles of the christian religion. Thus only six of

* This fact, however, has been lately denied by a vehement advocate for confessions and subscriptions. "The doctrine of justification," says he, "is explained with much greater nicety in the French Confession, (Article eighteenth,) than it is in ours (Article eleventh); and with such nicety, as occasioned a long dispute between the French and some German divines, of whom Piscator was one." *Church of England vindicated, in requiring Subscription, &c.* p. 52. But in truth these disputes were of much longer standing. "Osiander, in his Confutation of the book, which Melancthon wrote against him, observes, that there are twenty several opinions concerning *Justification*, all drawn from the Scriptures, by the men only of the Augustan Confession." Ep Taylor, Lib. Proph. p. 80.

them are referred to as speaking of *the Providence of God*, in which number (I am loath to observe it) the English confession is not reckoned for one ; though both Jewell's Apology and the thirty-nine Articles are inserted in this collection.

Again, eleven of these sixteen confessions take no notice of *Resurrection of the Dead*. I mention these omissions for the sake of those gentlemen, who would have it believed, that churches cannot be sure of the orthodoxy of their ministers in the most important points of the christian religion, without obliging them to subscribe to their established confessions.* How many excellent ministers have there been in different protestant churches, who never gave those churches any security by way of subscription, that they believed either *a resurrection of the dead*, or *the providence of God* ?

It is not at all necessary to carry this disquisition any farther. How particular churches in subsequent times have been embroiled on account of their established confessions, is well known. In some of these churches the inconveniences of insisting on these tests of orthodoxy have been so great, that they have found it the wisest way either entirely to drop them, or to content themselves with some general declaration, or promise from the minister, that he will not openly oppose them. In some churches a formal subscription

* See Dr Stebbing's Rational Enquiry into the proper Methods of supporting Christianity.

is still required, even where the inconveniences of it have been no less, and where the most serious, conscientious, and useful ministers, are still groaning under the burden of such subscriptions. It is chiefly for the sake of such as these, that this disquisition is undertaken, if by any means our present governors (who, if they had had the original work of reformation in their hands, together with the light and experience, which the present and past ages have afforded, would, it may be presumed, not have imposed it) may be prevailed with to remove *a yoke, which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear.**

But to proceed. Upon this short view of the tendency and effects of established confessions in protestant churches, the following reflections seem to be very natural.

1. It was a great misfortune to the Protestants, that their confessions should abound with explications of so many minute points of scholastic theology, which, without stopping one popish mouth, with respect to the general accusation of *heresy*, tended so manifestly to narrow their original foundation, and to give their common adversaries so great an advantage, by rendering their breaches among themselves, occasioned by these explications, utterly irreconcilable.

2 It was a greater misfortune still, that they should think of establishing these explications as tests of or-

* This was written in the year 1755.

thodoxy, by requiring their ministers to swear to them, or subscribe them, as an indispensable condition of admitting them to the pastoral office. Had they been contented with a solemn declaration on the part of teachers and pastors, "that they received the Scriptures as the word of God, and would instruct the people out of those *only*," leaving them at liberty to disown whatever, after proper examination, they judged inconsistent with them; in all human probability the interests of Popery would have declined more visibly, and the true ends of reformation have been more speedily, as well as more effectually promoted.

But, after all, they who are extremely out of temper with the first Reformers, for their mistaken and unseasonable zeal in thus prescribing religious opinions to their fellow Christians, without sufficient warrant of Scripture, would do well to consider in what situation they were.

Many abuses in Popery lay open to the observation of men of *all* sorts. But it could hardly be credited of a sudden, by men of *any* sort, that the greatest part of that astonishing structure, called THE CHURCH, which pretended to have for its foundation the Apostles and Prophets, and Christ himself for its corner stone, should be a mere heap of antichristian rubbish. It is, therefore, no wonder that the most enlightened of our first Protestant Fathers should be afraid of demolishing too much. It was visible with what props and supports the most eminent saints and doctors of

former ages had accommodated the edifice. And these, it might well be imagined, would hardly have been placed there by such venerable hands, without some good reason, and apparent necessity. In those days, nothing was thought to be sufficiently confirmed by scripture testimonies, without additional vouchers from the ancient worthies of the church; and accordingly Tertullian, Chrysostom, Austin, and Jerome regularly took their places on the same bench of judgment with Paul, Peter, James, and John.*

In process of time some particular persons began to see into this mistake. In our own country the learned Cartwright, in his dispute with Archbishop Whitgift, about the year 1573, took the courage to appeal from the authority of the Fathers, and to prescribe them narrower limits in the province of determining religious controversies. How this would be received in those days, might easily be conjectured without particular information. The terms, in which Cartwright had characterized these venerable doctors, were collected together in a book of Bancroft's, and set off with tragical exclamations, as if they had been little less than so much blasphemy. † ‡

* See the *Catholicus Veterum Consensus*, at the end of the *Corpus Confessionum*.

† Strype's *Life of Whitgift*, p. 51.

‡ Cartwright was an able and zealous Puritan, and one of the most learned men of his age. He was an eloquent and popular preacher, and in 1570 was chosen Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, where he had been educated. To the high church

Some few years after this, Erasmus Johannes, a schoolmaster at Antwerp, took still greater liberties with antiquity. "He affirmed, that all the councils which had met, and all the books of the Fathers, which had been written since the death of the Apostles, were infected with antichristian errors, not ex-

party, however, he soon made himself obnoxious by the liberal sentiments delivered in his lectures respecting church government and discipline. When Whitgift became vice chancellor of the university, he had sufficient influence to deprive Cartwright of his professorship. A long controversy ensued between them, in which Cartwright opposed the hierarchical establishment, and the peculiar ceremonies of the Church of England.

At length, to escape the persecutions, with which he was threatened, he was obliged to leave his country. He visited many universities on the continent, and was treated with great respect. Beza wrote to a friend in England, "Here is now with us your countryman, Thomas Cartwright, than whom I think the sun doth not see a more learned man." When the excitements of the occasion had subsided, he returned to his native country, but was not suffered to remain long in peace.

Whitgift was the vigilant and persevering enemy of every one, who did not yield humble obedience to the authority of the church. Cartwright again felt the weight of his persecution combined with that of the ruling party, and a second time sought an asylum in exile, where he remained five years. When he ventured back, he was charged with being a promoter of sedition, arraigned, and imprisoned. Notwithstanding these harsh proceedings, he continued boldly to publish and defend his sentiments; nor did he remit his zeal and exertions during the remainder of his life, although he was often thrown into prison for bearing testimony to the dictates of his conscience and judgment. He died in 1603, aged sixty-seven years.

The history of the church reveals to us the names of few persons, who were more remarkable for a spirit of independence, firmness, talents, and learning, than Cartwright. He had the

cepting the famous council of Nice." He proposed, therefore, that, in order to a perfect reformation, the new phrases and new ways of speaking, invented by the Fathers, should be wholly suppressed and laid aside, and all religious propositions expressed according to the simplicity of Christ and his Apostles. "If any man," says he, "finds himself obliged to use new terms to express the articles of his faith, so that the words of the Prophets and Apostles are not sufficient for him, that man's doctrines and religion are

courage to promulgate sentiments of the most unpopular kind, at a time when doubt was heresy, and disaffection to establishments was rebellion. From the beginning he denied, that civil authority could lawfully interfere in the affairs of the church, and that the power of bishops was no more than that of the other clergy. He insisted, that every minister ought to be chosen by the church, or congregation, over which he is to preside, and that the Gospel gives him no authority beyond his own congregation. The sign of the cross in baptism, festivals, and many other forms and ceremonies of the Episcopal Church, he affirmed to be unscriptural additions; and in all his labours he aimed to bring back church discipline and the modes of worship to what he believed to be the simplicity of apostolical times. In private life he was amiable, pious, and benevolent.

To show something of the spirit of the age, as well as the temper of Whitgift, the following passage is quoted, which was the language of this prelate when Cartwright and his friends petitioned for some indulgence, because they were brethren. Whitgift replied, "What signifies their being brethren? Anabaptists, and Arians, and other heretics, would be accounted brethren; their haughty spirits will not suffer them to see their error; they deserve as great punishment as Papists, because both conspire against the church." *Strype's Annals of the Reformation*, vol. i. chap. 57; vol. ii. chap. 1.—*Neal's History of the Puritans*, vol. i. —*Biographia Britan. Art. Cartwright.* EDITOR.]

certainly new as well as his terms ; for otherwise he would easily find, in the Scripture, language proper enough to express his notions.”* But the times were not yet ripe for the toleration of these sentiments ; and the poor man, who was hardy enough to venture them with the public, was obliged to fly his country.

From these days, the authority of the Fathers hath continued gradually to decline among all reasonable and consistent Protestants, and more particularly since the publication of Mr Daillé’s famous book, *De Usu Patrum*, in 1631. But none, that I know of, ventured so far as the schoolmaster of Antwerp, till, about thirty years ago, an eminent prelate of our own church, advanced pretty much the same doctrine, concerning the explication of points of faith, by new and unscriptural phrases ; for which his Lordship underwent the discipline of several orthodox pens ;† but without any loss of reputation among those who considered things with less prejudice. For, when it was seen that his lordship had reduced his antagonists to the disagreeable necessity of holding, that “*new and unscriptural* words would better fix the sense of scripture doctrine, than the words of Christ and his Apostles,” the clamour subsided. Reasonable men began to see the inconvenience of adopting a principle, which would go near to justify the worst im-

* La Roche, Abridgment, vol. i. p. 218.

† See Dr Stebbing’s Rational Enquiry, p. 25.

positions of Popery ; and the practice of requiring subscription to human explications of Christian doctrine, is now considered and treated, by many different sorts of sensible writers, as an unwarrantable encroachment on christian liberty ; from which, there is reason to believe, all who are capable and willing to examine the subject *without partiality and without hypocrisy*, heartily desire a happy deliverance.

Upon this state of the case, it appears, that the matter of complaint does not affect the *Fathers* of our Reformation by far so much as their *Sons* and *Successors*. Our first Reformers were beset with their own and other men's prejudices, to a degree that rendered them, in a great measure, incapable of conviction. It was next to impossible to convince them, that their established confessions of faith were unchristian impositions, for which there was no just authority, when they had the early practice of the Christian church to appeal to, long before the tyrannical spirit of Rome prevailed. Their veneration for antiquity prevented their seeing that these very precedents were some of the steps by which the papal power ascended to its height, and arrived at the plenitude of its usurpation.

But, since it has been made to appear, that some of the *Fathers*, who lived nearest to the times of the *Apostles*, were greatly mistaken in the sense they put upon some *Scriptures*, with respect to points of

no small importance, we have reason to hope, that our superiors will no longer bind either themselves or us to an implicit acquiescence in an authority, which may occasionally be extremely inconsistent with our original obligations as Christians, as well as with the distinguishing principles of our profession as Protestants. Whatever expedients of peace and order their own sort of prudence, or the exigencies of the times they lived in, might suggest to these venerable Fathers, they certainly had no right to prescribe articles of faith to *us*. And, should either they themselves, or any other in their name, pretend to it, we beg leave to remind them of a capital maxim, to the truth of which the Fathers themselves have occasionally born their testimony, namely, *The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain all things necessary to salvation, and are the sole ground of the faith of a Christian.**

Upon this principle, all imposed subscriptions to articles of faith, and religious doctrines, conceived in unscriptural terms, and enforced by human authority, are utterly unwarrantable, and not to be defended but by arguments and pretences highly dishonourable to the sacred writings, and, in many

* For a compendious view of the testimony of the Fathers to the sufficiency of the holy scriptures as a rule of religion, the reader may consult a book entitled, *The Divine Oracles*, written by the learned and candid Mr John Brekell, printed for Waugh, &c. 1749.

cases, contradictory to the express contents of them.

But, forasmuch as there never yet was any instance of a prosperous usurpation destitute of advocates to lay in for it a claim of right and justice, it would be strange if this matter of subscription, wherein such large and opulent bodies of men are interested, should be left to shift for itself. What the orators of the church have offered on this behalf we shall now briefly consider.

CHAP. II.

On a Right to establish Confessions as Tests of Orthodoxy.

THE fundamental position, on which the authority of established confessions in protestant communions depends, is this. "Every particular church, considered as a society, has a *right*, as other societies have, to secure its own peace and welfare, by all lawful means; and, consequently, to prescribe such terms of communion as appear to be the most expedient for the purpose; provided that nothing be required, under this pretence, which is contrary to the word of God, or inconsistent with the liberty of other churches."

To this it has been answered in short, "That, by admitting the principle of self defence and self

preservation in matters of religion, all the persecutions of the Heathens against the Christians, and even the popish Inquisition, may be justified.* If the church of England, for example, has a right to fix her own terms of communion, and, in consequence of that, to secure the obedience of her members by temporal rewards and penalties ; the church of Portugal must, upon the same principles, have an equal right to secure herself by the discipline of an *holy office*, or how otherwise she thinks proper.

The proviso, that, “ church ordinances be agreeable to the word of God,” will not in the present case help the protestant churches at all. *Established* confessions, being human compositions, must either be subject to examination by the private judgment of those who profess, as all Protestants do, to make the written word their only rule of religion ; or else the church must claim a right of interpreting the Scriptures for all her members, exclusive of the right of private judgment.† The former of these princi-

* See Bishop Hoadly’s Speech for the Repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, in Tindal’s Continuation of Rapin Thoyras, 8vo. vol xxvii. p. 237.

† The late Bishop Conybeare, in his famous Subscription Sermon, argues from the *consent* required by the Apostles to *their* doctrines, to the *consent* required by succeeding church governors to *human* articles. This fallacy has been too apt to pass without examination ; but the supposition upon which it is supported, is indeed neither more nor less than this, “ Scripture truths and the church’s explications stand upon the same authority.”

ples manifestly precludes the right of the church to establish *any thing* as a condition of Christian communion, without the previous consent of *all* her members; that is to say, of all who, without that condition, would have a right to Christian communion.* The latter, indeed, vests the church with a full measure of authority to establish what she pleases; but then it is an authority which every protestant church most expressly disclaims, and condemns in the church of Rome as an impudent and groundless usurpation.

There is, indeed, nothing more evident, than that every Christian hath a right to search the Scriptures; a right which he cannot transfer, either to any church or to any single person, because it is his indispensable duty to exercise it personally for himself. And if it is his duty to *search*, it must also be his duty to *determine* for himself; and, if he finds just cause to dissent

* Honest old Rogers, by *the church which hath authority in controversies of faith*, understands not only the *aggregate body*, but *every member of sound judgment in the same*. Cath. Doct. Art. xx. Propos. 3. well knowing that every intelligent Christian, with the scriptures before him, is, upon protestant principles, and in decrees of this nature, *a church to himself*. This leaves no room for Bishop Burnet's distinction between an infallible authority, and an authority of order, which last he faintly insinuates, might be safely intrusted with the body of the clergy. But his Lordship, to do him justice, qualifies this with a *proviso*, that this body is *properly disposed* for the province. Perhaps it might be as difficult to find such a body of men, as to find single persons without mistakes. See Bishop Burnet's Exposition, fol. p. 195.

from any or all the human establishments upon earth.

Some writers on this subject discover an inclination to deny the right of private judgment in *every case* where it is opposed to church authority. These we leave to reconcile their principles with their separation from Rome. Others attempt, by various arguments, some of which will occur hereafter, to prove that the authority of the church to frame and settle confessions of faith and doctrine for all her members, is perfectly consistent with the right of private judgment. But, to discover the fallacy of all arguments to this purpose, it is only necessary to consider, that, if this supposed authority was vigorously exerted, and applied in *all* cases, as it ought to be, if the authority is *real*, and if, on the other hand, the people were diligent and careful in searching the Scriptures every one for himself, as all Protestants agree they ought to do, the consequence would most probably be, that the far greater part of honest and sensible Christians would be excluded from the communion of every church which has an established confession. For where is there one of these confessions which does not contain some very material decisions, from which an intelligent Christian, who hath duly examined the Scriptures, may not reasonably *dissent*? I had almost said, where is there one of them to which a knowing and thinking Christian can *assent* in all points, without prosti-

tuting his understanding and conscience to the doctrines and commandments of men? I say, a *knowing* and *thinking* Christian; for he must have considered the case before us very superficially, who does not perceive, that the adherence of such numbers to the peculiar doctrines of the church from which they receive their denomination, and even to some doctrines common to the creeds and confessions of all churches, which call themselves orthodox, is owing to their ignorance, their indolence, their secularity, or the early prejudices of education, which are known to be the unhappy circumstances of the common people, all over the Christian world.

Some zealous men have, indeed, inferred a necessity for confessions, and consequently an authority in the church to establish them, from these very indispositions and incapacities of the people to examine and judge for themselves. But, though this is perhaps the best plea of *right* which the church has to allege, yet wiser and cooler advocates for confessions choose not to abide by an argument, which would equally vindicate the church of Rome with respect to many of her impositions. Not to mention, that these indispositions and incapacities in the clergy would be but an awkward reason for making *their* assent and subscription to confessions an indispensable condition of being admitted into the church as teachers.

These prudent gentlemen, therefore, seem inclined to acquit the laity of all concern with established confessions, and to confine their authority to the clergy; insomuch, that, if I understand some of our modern casuists on this subject, a layman, if he can get over his own scruples, may pray, hear the word, and even communicate with what protestant church he pleases. If this be really true, we have reason to be thankful for better times; for undoubtedly some of us have remembered worse.

But, however this matter might turn out upon the experiment, certain it is, that, in so far as the laity are allowed not to be bound by these church confessions, the point of *right* to establish them as tests of orthodoxy is fairly given up, as well for the clergy as the laity; since whatever rule is sufficient to direct the faith and practice of the layman, must likewise be sufficient to direct the teaching of the clergyman, unless the clergyman may be obliged to teach doctrines, which the layman is not obliged either to believe or to practise.

“But,” say some men, “if there be really an *expedience* and *utility* in these public formularies, called Confessions of Faith, we may well infer a *right* to establish them, although concerning such right the Scripture should be silent. Many things, relating to public worship and public edification, must be left to the prudence and discretion of church governors for the time being; and, if confessions are manifestly

useful and expedient for the church, there must be an authority lodged somewhere to prepare and enforce them."

The *expediency* and *utility* of confessions will be very particularly considered in the next chapter ; for which reason I shall forbear to say any thing farther to this plea at present, save only a word or two concerning this method of arguing from the probable expedience or utility of any thing in religion to a right or authority to employ or introduce it.

No wise man, who hath duly considered the genius and design of the christian religion, will look for much utility or expedience, where the church or church governors go beyond their *plain commission*. And, whatever may be left to the prudence and discretion of church governors, there is *so much more* left to the conscience of every Christian in his personal capacity, that it greatly behoves such governors to beware they encroach not on a province, which is without their limits. This consideration has always disposed me to reason in a manner just contrary to these gentlemen, namely, from the authority to the utility of religious measures. My opinion is, that, where the methods of promoting Christianity are matter of scripture precept, or plainly recommended by scripture precedents, there such methods should be strictly followed and adhered to, even though the *expediency* of them should not be very evident *a priori*. We can have no pretence of *right* or *authority* to alter such

methods for others seemingly more expedient, while so very much of the effect of religion, or, in other words, of its utility, is made by our blessed Master to depend on the inward frame of every man's heart, into which ordinary church governors can have no farther discernment than other men. On this account those means of edification, public or private, will always, in my esteem, bid the fairest for success, which are the truest copies of apostolic originals. Notions of expedience in any thing more than these, when there is nothing to judge by but superficial appearances, have frequently led men to interfere very unseasonably with the dictates of other men's consciences; and no greater mischief has ever been occasioned by any thing in the christian church, than by those very expedients of human prudence, from which the best effects have been expected.

Among other instances, which might be given to verify this observation, we have one at home, in which all those, who are called to the ministry are too nearly concerned not to be capable judges. After some progress had been made in the reformation of the church of England, it was thought to be a great defect, that a public confession of faith and doctrine should still be wanting.* To supply this defect, the *Articles of Religion* were compiled, published, and enjoined to be subscribed. These Articles, with some alterations, which passed in those days for improvements,

* Burnet's Hist. Reform vol. ii. p. 166; and vol. iii. p. 210.

are still subscribed by, at least, one hundred of our ministers every year. That above one fifth of this number do not subscribe or assent to these Articles, in one uniform sense, we have great reason to believe; and yet the avowed purpose of this general subscription is *to prevent diversity of opinions*. And, indeed, considering to what sorts of men this test is made indispensable, it is, I think, as much as can be expected, if another fifth subscribe them in *any* sense, but the sense they have of wanting preferment in the church, if they should not.

It is true, all these persons minister in their several congregations by one common form, framed, for the general, on the model of the confession they have subscribed; and so far all has a fair and honest appearance, and, while they keep their thoughts to themselves, is consistent enough. But no sooner are many of them at liberty to deliver their own or other men's sentiments from the pulpit, but the established system is laid aside, or, perhaps, if it comes in their way, quite upset,* and many things written and uttered with all freedom, by different persons, equally irreconcilable to each other, as well as to the orthodox confession.

* "All those who write and preach in this nation are not her [the church of England's] sons, any more than they of Geneva, or Scotland, or New England, are," says Bishop Rast, *Defence of Origen*, &c. *Phoenix*, vol. i. p. 83. So that this is no new complaint. See, likewise, Dr Hartley's *Observations on Man*, vol. ii. p. 354; and a remarkable instance in *A Defence of the Essay on Spirit*, p. 24.

What now is the *utility* or *expedience* in this affair of subscription, which will atone for the scandal brought upon the cause of Christianity by this unscriptural article of church discipline? To say nothing of the distress of many a conscientious minister under the unhappy dilemma of, *subscribe* or *starve*; is it possible that the ignorance, the indolence, or the insincerity of the rest should not make considerable impressions, both upon the friends and enemies of revelation? Suppose the herd of mankind were too much employed in other business to turn their attention of themselves to remarks of this nature, yet the zeal and eagerness of the litigants to expose this prevarication on either side, by casting their subscriptions in each other's teeth, will not suffer the most incurious mortal to be long uninformed of it, if he should only look into some of the commonest books of controversy for his mere amusement.

The sum of the whole matter then is this. Lodge your church authority in what hands you will, and limit it with whatever restrictions you think proper, you cannot assert to it a right of deciding in controversies of faith and doctrine, or, in other words, a right to require assent to a certain sense of scripture, exclusive of other senses, without an unwarrantable interference with those rights of private judgment, which are manifestly secured to every individual by the scriptural terms of christian liberty, and thereby contradicting the original principles of the protestant reformation.

This point being settled, the squabbles among particular churches concerning their supposed liberty within their respective departments, in so far as these confessions come in question, is about a thing of nought. For none of them having a right to establish or to prescribe such doctrinal confessions for the whole body, it is matter of great indifference, setting aside the scandal of it, in what degree they exclude or make room for one another.

But, to give this matter a little consideration with respect to the present effects of it upon christian societies, let us suppose that protestant churches *have* such a right, each within its own confines ; the question is, how shall one church exercise this right, without encroaching on the right of another ? Upon the genuine grounds of separation from the church of Rome, all particular churches are co-ordinate ;* they have all the same right in an equal

* The protestant churches every where set up on this principle ; what regard they have paid to it since is another affair. One remarkable instance may be worth mentioning. "The refugees," says Mr La Roche, "who were driven out of the Low Countries by the duke of Alva in the year 1571, held a synod at Embden, and their first canon was, that no church should have dominion over another church." And, to testify their sincerity herein, they put the French and Dutch confessions upon the same footing, by subscribing them both. *Abridgment*, vol. i. p. 141. But N. B. The Dutch confession was not then established, and these were poor, friendless refugees. 'Tis pity but some of them had lived to see how sacredly this canon of Embden was observed in the synod of Dort.

degree ; and the decisions of one are, in point of authority, upon the very same level with those of another. This being so, I do not see how it is possible for any church to *exercise* this right in those instances where she establishes doctrines *peculiar to herself*, and inconsistent with the doctrines of other churches, without abridging those churches of their right to establish their own doctrines. No church can have a *right* to establish any doctrines but upon the supposition that they are *true*. If the doctrines established in one church are *true*, the contrary doctrines established in another church must be *false* ; and, I presume, no church will contend for a *right* to establish *false* doctrines. And; indeed, whatever may be pretended, this is the very footing, upon which all protestant churches have, occasionally, treated the churches that differed from them, and from whence the conclusion to a disinterested by-stander is obvious ; namely, that, in consequence of these co-ordinate powers, none of them had a right to establish any doctrines, but with the unanimous consent of all the rest.

It is true, Protestants of one state or country have been tender of condemning the confession of those of another, by any public sentence ; and reason good ; their powers are limited by their situation, and extend not beyond their own departments, nor would their censures be regarded elsewhere. But what instance is there upon record, where this liberty has been allowed, as the co-ordinate principle manifestly re-

quires it should be, to more than one church in the same protestant state? Every party, in every protestant state, has, by turns, made some attempts to have their religious tenets established by public authority. In every state, some one party has succeeded; and, having succeeded, imposes its own confession upon all the rest; excluding all dissenters from more or fewer of the common privileges of citizens, in proportion as the civil magistrate is more or less in the mood to vindicate or distinguish the system he thinks fit to espouse.

This has been the case, at different periods, with different churches in the same country. And, what is chiefly remarkable to our present purpose, the party defeated has constantly exclaimed against the practice, as an unreasonable, unchristian, and wicked tyranny; the very practice, which they themselves, in their prosperity, endeavoured to support by every claim of right, and to defend by every argument of utility and expedience.*

* "It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience." *Assembly's Confession*, ch. xxxi. art. 3. This hath given occasion to apply some words of Isaiah, viz. *Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged*, to certain dissenters, who have scrupled to subscribe the first clause of the twentieth article of our church. At present this wit would be misapplied. In the year 1718, some of the wisest and most eminent among the dissenting ministers made a noble stand against some imposers of tests in their own fraternity. And in the year 1727, more of them refused to subscribe this very Westminster Confession.

Of this many remarkable examples might be given, in the complaints of churchmen of different denominations in adversity ; who, in the day of their exaltation, had carried church power as far as it could well stretch ; and who, when the severities of the adverse party forced these lamentations from them, were obliged to plead their cause upon principles, which made no reserve of authority with respect to one sort of religious society more than another.*

Among others to whom established confessions had been particularly grievous, were the Remonstrants in Holland, after the synod of Dort. Their assemblies were prohibited, and their ministers silenced and banished, for no other offence but contradicting certain doctrines, which, as we have seen above, the forefathers of their persecutors held to be of no importance ; and which had gained no new merit but that of being established by law.

One would have imagined that this usage would have cured the Remonstrants of all good liking to *confessions* for ever. And so perhaps it did of their

* Thus the ingenious Bishop Taylor, pleading for *the liberty of prophesying*, at a time when, to use his own expression, *the vessel of the church was dashed in pieces*, found it necessary to assert against the taskmasters of those days, that, "If we have found out what foundation Christ and his Apostles did lay, that is, what body and system of articles simply necessary they taught and required of us to believe ; we need not, we cannot go any further for foundation, WE CANNOT ENLARGE THAT SYSTEM OR COLLECTION." p. 17.

good liking to *all* confessions, but *one of their own framing* ; which Episcopius and his fellows actually composed, subscribed, and published, in this state of exile.

This step was so very extraordinary for men in their condition, whose distresses had been occasioned by enforcing a system drawn up in the same form, that they rightly judged the world would expect some satisfactory account of it, which therefore they attempt to give, in a long Apology prefixed to their Confession ; wherein, not contented with alleging such inducements as might well be supposed to oblige men in their situation to explain and avow their principles to the public, they enter into a particular detail of arguments in favour of confessions in general ; dropping indeed the point of *right* to establish them as tests of truth, but insisting largely on their *utility* and *expediency* in a variety of cases ; and, as they seem to me to have brought together the whole merits of the cause on that head of defence, I shall attend them in the next chapter, with some particular considerations on the several articles of their plea.

CHAP. III.

On the Expedience and Utility of Confessions.

It had been objected to confessions in general, that “they derogated from the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures; that they encroached upon the liberty of private conscience, and the independency of protestant churches; and that they tended to nothing better than separation and schism.”

The Remonstrants reply, that “these objections did not affect confessions themselves, but only the *abuse* of them.” But, however, as the objectors had so many instances to appeal to, where confessions had been, and still were thus *abused*, and the Remonstrants so few, if any, where they were not, the latter were obliged to set out with very ample concessions.

“Undoubtedly,” say they, “those phrases and forms of speaking, in which God and Christ delivered themselves at first, for the instruction of unlearned and ordinary men, must needs be sufficient for the instruction of Christians in all succeeding ages; consequently it is possible that the church of Christ may not only *be*, but also that it may *well be* without those human forms and explications, called Confessions.*

* Preface to the Remonstrants' Confession, published in English, at London, 1676, pp. 12, 13.

One would wonder now, what the Remonstrants could find to say for the support of their side of the question. For, if the phrases and forms of speaking, made use of in the written word, are sufficient for the instruction of unlearned or ordinary men in all things which concern the worship of God, and their own and others' everlasting salvation; and if, as the objectors insisted, and the Remonstrants could not deny, many and great evils were, *for the most part*, occasioned by such phrases and forms of speaking in confessions, as are not to be found in Scripture, the objectors were fairly authorized to conclude, not barely for the *possibility* that the church of Christ might *well be*, but for the *certainty* that it might *better be*, without such human forms, than with them.

The Remonstrants, however, attempt to recover their ground as follows. "If prophesyings, or interpretations of Scripture," say these apologists, "are not unprofitable, yea rather, if they be sometimes in certain respects necessary, when proposed by teachers and pastors in universities and churches, or other christian assemblies, for the information of the ignorant, &c. in familiar, clear, and usual expressions, though not in the very words of Scripture; it cannot seem unprofitable, much less unlawful or hurtful, if *more* ministers of Jesus Christ do, by mutual consent, joint studies and endeavours, for the greater illustration of divine truth, removing of slanders, edifying the christian community, or other

holy and pious purposes, publicly open and declare their judgments upon the meanings of Scripture, and that in certain composed forms.*

It is no easy matter to discover the drift of this argument. Do the Remonstrants mean to insist on the superior influence and authority of *more* ministers, in the business of expounding the Scriptures, in comparison with single pastors, or professors? By no means. Upon any supposition of this nature, the Belgic Confession had an authority which rendered their revolt from it inexcusable. Would they be understood to say, that Confessions composed by the joint studies of several ministers, are as useful as ordinary sermons and lectures in churches and universities? No, they make no such comparison; they only infer, with much ambiguity, from the premises, that Confessions, with the circumstances mentioned, *cannot seem unprofitable*.

But, be their meaning what you will, the cases of interpreting Scripture in occasional prophesyings, and in stated confessions, are dissimilar in so many respects, that nothing can be inferred from the *utility* of the former, in favour of the latter; but rather the contrary.

If prophesyings, or interpretations of Scripture in christian assemblies, are not delivered in familiar, clear, and usual forms of speech, they are neither necessary nor profitable; nor can any thing be infer-

* Ibid. pp. 13, 14.

red from the utility of *such* prophesyings at all. On the other hand, if the Scriptures are opened and explained to the people in easy and familiar expressions, by their ordinary pastors, what possible use can you find for a systematical confessional? unless you think fit to establish it as a necessary supplement to the holy Scripture, and then you once more return the question to the point of *right*.

Again; what the preacher delivers from the pulpit, or the professor from the chair, they deliver as the sentiments and conclusions of single men, who have no authority to enforce their explications, any farther than their own good sense, integrity, accuracy, and judgment, make way for them. For the rest, their doctrines may be questioned, the men themselves called upon to review them, and, if they see reason, correct, and even retract them, not only without offence, but, in some cases, with advantage to the common faith. But doctrines, opinions, and explications of Scripture, reduced to a fixed form, and avowed by the public act of many subscribing ministers, (who, by the way, are full as likely to be fallible in a body, as in their personal capacity) put on quite another aspect. In that case all examination is precluded. No one subscriber is empowered to explain or correct for the rest. Nor can any of them retract, without standing in the light of a schismatic and a revolter from his brethren.

It is to little purpose that the Remonstrants would limit the stress to be laid upon confessions, to their agreement with truth, and reason, and scripture. The matter of complaint is, that this agreement should be predetermined by the decision of these leading subscribers, in such sort, as to discourage all free examination, and constrain the people to acquiesce in a precarious system, by the mere influence of great names and respectable authorities, which, without any additional weight, are too apt to overawe the judgment of all sorts of men, even in cases of the greatest importance.

The *expediency* of Confessions in no wise appearing from these general considerations, let us now see what particular uses the Remonstrants have for them.

And here they tell us “of times when gross and noxious errors prevail in the world; when necessary heads of belief are neglected, and many points of faith urged and insisted on, which are not necessary; when no distinction is made between doctrines that are barely profitable, and those which are absolutely necessary; when human inventions are bound upon men’s consciences; and, lastly, when many false and groundless doctrines are palliated and clothed in scripture language. In these times, they think it not barely expedient, but in a good measure necessary, that pastors of churches should advise and consult together, and, if they perceive that *blind, miserable mortals* may be assisted in their searches

after truth, in such days of danger, by a clear elucidation of divine meanings, then may they profitably set forth the same, &c.”*

But, in the first place, how does it appear that Confessions have more of this *elucidating* property than other sorts of Rescripts? It is a common complaint, that these formularies of doctrine, abounding in artificial and scholastic terms, are rather apt to perplex and confound things that are otherwise clear and plain, than to illustrate any thing with a superior degree of perspicuity. And I am really afraid there is no room to except the very confession to which this apology is prefixed.

But to let this alone; there occurs another difficulty, with respect to this *elucidation*, not so easily got over. It is well known that some opinions have been formally condemned by the framers of creeds and confessions, as gross and noxious errors, which, however, have been maintained by very solid reasoning, not to say considerable authorities, from the Scriptures themselves.

“There are few heresies,” says Dr Stebbing, “which great learning and good sense have not been called in to countenance; he, therefore, that would effectually crush them, must take away these supports.”† That is to say, he must, if he can; and that has not always proved an easy task, even when

* Pages 14, 15.

† Rational Enquiry, p. 47.

attempted by the accumulated skill and learning of Councils or Convocations. These are difficulties, out of which *blind, miserable mortals* are rarely extricated by confessions, which are rather of the dogmatical, than the didactic strain; and oftentimes leave the reader to guess at the reasons, why the compilers are so positive in some of their assertions, for which they do not condescend to offer any proof. These *noxious errors*, too, have sometimes procured themselves to be established by another party of Confessionists and Creedmakers; in which case, these authorized formularies are so far from being of any real *utility* to an unprejudiced inquirer, that they only serve to destroy the force and virtue of each other.

Again, if confessions are really profitable towards suppressing those gross and noxious errors, it must be profitable, and, in the same proportion, needful, to enlarge and amplify them as often as such errors arise, and the birth of every new heresy should always be attended with a new article in the confession.*

* One article of difference between K. Charles I. and the Scotch Protesters, anno 1638, turned upon the necessity of renewing and applying confessions of faith to every present emergency of the church. This the Scots compared to the riding of Marches, or boundaries, upon every new "Encroachment." And, indeed, supposing the utility of confessions to be what the Remonstrants say it is, King Charles's whole Convocation could not have furnished him with an answer to this argument of the North Britons in behalf of their new formulary. See-Rushworth's Collections, vol. ii. p. 774.

Perhaps there is scarce a year passes over, in any country where the presses are open and men's tongues at liberty, without bringing forth some new opinion or reviving some old one with new circumstances, contrary to, or at least different from the approved and orthodox system ; and, consequently, within the description of a gross and noxious error. Suppose the requisite strictures on these heterodoxies had been added to the confessions of the several churches, where they have appeared for the last two hundred years ; to what a comfortable bulk would a *Harmony* of these confessions have amounted by this time ? What plenty of elucidation might such a *Harmony* have afforded to *blind, miserable mortals* ? And what a field is here opened for declaiming against the indolence and drowsiness of our appointed watchmen, who, during this long and perilous interval, have been silent upon so many important subjects ; suffering this multitude of heresies to pass uncorrected by any public censure, even while their partisans have been incessantly preaching up to us the great *utility* of confessions, as the only sovereign antidotes against them ?

But, instead of inveighing against our superiors for any omissions of this kind, let us make use of this very circumstance to point out to them the *inutility*, perhaps something worse, of our present established formularies of faith and doctrine. What is become of all those heresies, against which none of these

public provisions have been made? Why, many of them are dead and sunk down into utter oblivion, as if they had never been; others, being left open to free debate, have had no worse effect in religion, than other harmless, and innocent, and even edifying problems, are allowed to have in literature and philosophy. Whence the conclusion seems to be inevitable, that the malignity of other heresies, and perhaps the very existence of some of them, has been perpetuated, *only* by the respectable notice, that some church or other has thought fit to take of them in an established confession.

I will presume to support the justice of this remark, by an instance or two in our own establishment.

In the forty-second of King Edward's Articles, a formal censure was passed upon the restorers of Origen's opinion concerning *the temporary duration of future punishments*. But in the Articles of 1562, this censure is not to be found. Undoubtedly the question is of great importance with respect to the influences and sanctions of the christian religion; nor is there any point of theology upon which churches may be supposed to *decide* more reasonably, than this. And yet, had the negative of this problem, *whether future punishments shall be eternal?* still been stigmatized with this heretical brand, we should probably have wanted several learned and accurate disquisitions on the subject, from some of our most eminent writers, such as Rust, Tillotson, Hartly, &c. By whose

researches we have gained at least a clearer state of the case, and a more accurate insight into the language of the Scriptures relative to it, than the compilers of the article had before them; without laying any invidious prejudice on the judgment or conscience of any man living, or precluding the right, that every Christian has to determine for himself, in a case where his interest is so great and important.

Again, the fortieth of these original Articles “ affirmed it to be contrary to the orthodox faith, to maintain, that the souls of men deceased do sleep, without any manner of sense, to the day of judgment,” &c. This was likewise dismissed in 1562; since when, the doctrine condemned, and, some few faint efforts excepted, all controversy concerning it have lain dormant, till very lately, that something very like a demonstration, that our first reformers were mistaken on this head, has been offered to the world;* which probably had never seen the light, if an assent to this fortieth article had still remained a part of our ministerial subscription.

As to what the Remonstrants say of the neglect of necessary heads of belief; urging and insisting on

* In a sermon on *the Nature and End of Death*, and a curious appendix subjoined to the third edition of *Considerations on the Theory of Religion*, &c. by Dr Edmund Law, the reverend, learned, and worthy Master of St Peter's College, Cambridge. How many doctrines are *defended*, how many are *not opposed*, not because they are to be found in the New Testament, but because they are *established* in a Liturgy, or *decided* in an Article?

points of faith, which are not necessary ; binding human inventions on men's consciences ; misapplications of scripture expressions and authorities, and the like ; if these are not to be prevented or corrected by the current labours of able and honest pastors, joined to the justice, which every man owes to himself, in searching the Scriptures for satisfaction in all doubtful cases ; it is in vain to expect any relief from confessions ; many of which, if not all, are accused on some side, of these very abuses, which the Remonstrants propose by their means to reform.

2. Another use, which the Remonstrants have for confessions is, " to obviate foul and dishonest slanders, calumnies, and suspicions, with which those honest and upright divines, who undertake to set *blind, miserable* mortals right. may be soiled by their adversaries. In which case, say they, who is there, that will not think them constrained to inform the christian world, what manner of persons they are in religion, by an ingenuous confession of their judgment ; especially if they see that, unless they do it, all good men will be estranged from them, their proselytes return to their vomit, and, consequently, the truth of God be wounded through the sides of their wronged reputation."*

The Remonstrants had here an eye to their own particular case, and therefore we shall do no wrong to their argument, if we determine the value of it by

* Page 16, &c.

their particular success. One of the calumnies complained of in this preface is, that "the Remonstrants concealed some things, of which they were ashamed to give their judgment in public." How do we obviate this calumny by their confession? How does their publicly *confessing some* of their doctrines prove that they had *concealed none*? They do not venture to say, that in this formulary they had declared their judgment on *every* point of theology. On the contrary, they admit, that they had purposely waved certain thorny and subtile questions, *leaving them to the idle and curious*. Might not the doctrines relative to *these* questions be the very things they were ashamed to confess? And, if so, what is their apology for waving them, but mere subterfuge and evasion?

But, indeed, it was worse with the poor Remonstrants, than all this came to. No sooner was their confession made public, than their adversaries fell upon them with a fresh load of calumnies, taking occasion from the confession itself; accusing it of "swarming with dreadful heresies from the beginning to the end, not excepting the very title page.*"

What is now to be done? Shall the Remonstrants

* Bayle's Dict. Art. EPISCOPUS, Rem. F. See likewise La Roche, Abridg. p. 685, who mentions, indeed, only the censures of two private ministers on the Remonstrants' Confession, an effect, I am afraid, of his extreme and too visible partiality for their cause. They, who will take the trouble to turn to Bayle, loc. cit. will see, that the words, transcribed above, are part of a censure of this confession, published by the professors of Leyden.

go to work again, and publish a second confession to confute these new calumnies? And after that, if future occasion should be given, as they might be sure it would, a third, and a fourth? No, common sense would tell them, it was all labour in vain, and that there is but one way of refuting these endless calumnies effectually, namely, by confronting the accusation with matter of fact, and appealing, from time to time, to a sort of evidence, which formularies of confession will not admit of.

The Remonstrants seem to have been aware, that it might be thought sufficient to obviate all charges of heresy, if the accused parties were only to express themselves in scripture language. But they tell us, “that this very thing is charged upon them as a crime, that, under the words of Scripture, they cherish in their bosoms the worst meanings, and most prejudicial to the glory of God, and the salvation of man; which reduces them to a necessity, whether they will or no, by some public declaration of their judgment, to purge themselves, and to maintain and defend the sincerity of their belief.”*

Well, then, let us consider how this case stands. The Calvinists charge it upon the Remonstrants as a crime, that, under scripture words, they cherish the worst meanings. The Remonstrants say it is a calumny, and appeal to their confession. The same Remonstrants bring the same accusation against another set

* Pages 17, 18.

of men, as we have seen above. May not these men say too, it is a calumny? May not they too defend themselves in a confession? And at what does all this futile reasoning aim, but at proving, that whatever is once got into a confession must of necessity be infallibly true?

Where, indeed, any particular church can procure an establishment for its confession, in such sort as to make it a rule of teaching, and a test of orthodoxy for all her pastors and professors, a bridle upon the tongue, and a shackle upon the pen-hand of every man who is disposed to speak or write against it, formularies of this kind *may* have their *use* and *expediency*, in *securing the privileges, interests, and emoluments of that particular church*; and, being armed with coercive penalties, may likewise operate in the several cases abovementioned. But, according to our apologists, these are the circumstances in which the abuses of confessions do chiefly consist. “They are not for allowing confessions to be the limits and bounds within which religion is to be shut up; the indices of straight and crooked, or the anvil to which all controversies of faith are to be brought; nor would they have any man tied to them, but just so far, and so long, as he is convinced in his conscience, that the doctrine of the confession accords with the Scripture.”*

This is just and reasonable; and it would be both

* Pages 20, 21.

unjust and unreasonable, to deny the Remonstrants their due praise for their moderation, tenderness, and honest regard to the rights of private judgment. But, however, nothing is more certain, than that, by these limitations and concessions, they give up all the peculiar *utility* and expedience of these systematical forms, for which they profess themselves advocates in other parts of this preface ; leaving them no more virtue or efficacy in instructing the ignorant, confuting errors and heresies, or silencing calumnies, than may be reasonably claimed by, and ascribed to, the writings and discourses of any particular divine of judgment and learning.

There is, indeed, little doubt, but that, in bringing down confessions so very low, particularly in their threefold caution concerning the use of them, the Remonstrants took a particular aim at the synod of Dort, by whose *proud cruelty* they had suffered so much. In *their* situation, to have put any high value upon public confessions, had been to preclude themselves from all reasonable apology for their conduct. And yet who knows, in what all this moderation and lenity would have ended, had the Remonstrants been fortunate enough to have engaged the civil powers, and, with them, the majority on their side ? For my part, I should have entertained no worse opinion of their integrity, if, instead of this trimming apology, wherein they dexterously enough fetch back with one hand, what they had appeared

to give with the other, they had fairly and honestly told the world, what was certainly the truth of the case, that their circumstances required they should have a religious test as a cement of their party, and to put them upon the respectable footing of a *church*.

In the midst of all their moderation, we have seen them above expressing their concern, lest their *proselytes* should *return to their vomit*. In other passages they speak of confessions, as *watchtowers*, *ensigns*, and *standards*. On one occasion they have unwarily dropped this observation; "There are some things of so great weight and moment, that they cannot be gainsaid without the extreme hazard of our salvation. Freely to contradict these, or *quietly to suffer them to be contradicted by others, would be the farthest from prudence and charity possible.*" What, may we suppose, would the gentle *Episcopius* have done with the *gainsayers* of these things, invested, as he might possibly have been, with a commission from the secular arm? All this moderation and forbearance might, after all, have amounted to no more than what all protestant churches *profess*; namely, to assert the sovereign authority of the Scriptures, with a commodious saving to themselves of a concurrent privilege, of providing for the *utility* of their own *wellbeing*, by an orthodox test.*

* [The author's reasoning in this chapter to prove the inexpediency and inutility of Confessions of Faith, is clear and forcible; but his remarks on the Remonstrants, or Arminians, are

Let no man say, that, considering the temperate language of the Remonstrants, a surmise of this kind cannot be justified. In this verbal deference for the authority of the Scriptures, no church has ever gone farther than our own, nor consequently left greater latitude for private judgment.

“We receive and embrace,” says the church of England by the pen of Bishop Jewel, “all the canonical Scriptures, both of the Old and New Tes-

more severe than the merits of the case will justify. It cannot be correctly said, that they had a “religious test as a cement of their party.” The Confession of Faith, drawn up by Episcopius, was considered as exhibiting the outlines of their belief, but was never imposed as a test; it was never made a condition of church communion; clergymen were never required to subscribe it, nor to profess, either by a covenant or declaration, that they received it as a rule of faith by which they would abide.

Such a test, indeed, would have been in pointed opposition to their fundamental principles. It was the fond purpose of Arminius to unite sincere christians of all denominations and shades of opinion in the bonds of peace, charity, and christian fellowship. He desired to establish the terms and laws of communion rather in piety and good practice, than in any particular declarations of faith. Conduct he thought a better criterion of character than professions. It was another first principle with him, that every man should enjoy, without limitation, the right of judging for himself. In these sentiments he was followed by Episcopius and Grotius, and afterwards by the constellation of divines, who adorned the Arminian church in Holland, by Limborch, Le Clerc, and Wetstein.

With these principles as the foundation of their whole system, they never could have adopted a formulary of faith, which should be a medium, or a condition of fellowship. A confession which serves as a test, either by subscription or covenant, ex-

tament ; we own them to be the heavenly voices by which God hath revealed his will to us ; in them ONLY can the mind of man acquiesce ; in them all that is necessary for our salvation is abundantly and plainly contained ; they are the very might and power of God unto salvation ; they are the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets upon which the church of God is built ; they are the most certain and infallible rule, by which the church may be reduced, if she happen to stagger, slip, or err, by which all ecclesiastical doctrines ought to be tried ; no law, no tradition, no custom, is to be received or continued, if it be contrary to Scripture ; no, though St Paul himself, or an angel from heaven, should come and teach otherwise.”*

This was once the sense of the church of England, whatever authority she may have since pretended to, upon other principles. Be this as it may,

cludes all who do not comply. No such test existed among the Remonstrants. After their rude treatment at the Synod of Dort, and during their sufferings in prison and exile, Episcopius drew up a Confession, which was generally received by the churches, but was never recognized as having authority. Every person was allowed to interpret its articles according to his own sense of Scripture.

In this view, the Arminian Confession cannot be considered in the nature of a test, nor as having thrown any obstructions in the way of christian liberty, and free inquiry. *Mosheim*, vol. v. p. 461. EDITOR.]

* “*Contra eas nec legem, nec traditionem, nec consuetudinem ullam audiendam esse,*” says the Latin Apol. sect. 27.

such of her divines as have asserted this authority with the utmost zeal, and in the highest terms, have yet, in the same breath, extolled her moderation, in laying no greater stress upon her Confession, than the Remonstrants themselves seem to contend for.

“Our church,” says Bishop Bull, “professeth not to deliver *all* her articles (*all* I say, for some of them are coincident with the fundamental points of Christianity) as essentials of faith, without the belief whereof no man can be saved; but only propounds them as a body of safe and pious principles, for the preservation of peace, to be subscribed, and not openly contradicted, by her sons.”*

Nay, even the rigidly ecclesiastical Dr Stebbing allows, that, “when we speak of a *right* to determine what is the true sense of any article of faith, we do not propose the explication, given in virtue of this *right*, as a rule for the faith or conduct of christians; but only as a rule, according to which they shall either be admitted or not admitted to officiate as public ministers.”†

It is true, the obscurity of these concessions is such, that no man can tell what is intended to be given up by them, and what reserved for the church. In my opinion, they are hardly sense. But this likewise is the misfortune of the Remonstrants, who oscillate the question backwards and

* Vindication of the church of England, p. 178.

† Rational Enquiry, p. 36.

forwards, till no mortal can find out what they mean to ascribe to, or what to detract from, the virtue and merit of a public Confession.

The Remonstrants, however, have had thus far the better of us ; they *believed* their Confession at least when they made this Apology for it. We are driven to make Apologies for, and even to defend, subscription to a Confession which many subscribers do not believe ; and concerning which *no two thinking men*, according to an ingenious and right reverend writer, *ever agreed exactly in their opinion, even with regard to any one article of it.**

* Dedication to the Essay on Spirit, p. vi.

SELECTION

FROM

BISHOP HOADLY'S

WORKS.

BISHOP HOADLY.

JOHN HOADLY, grandfather of BENJAMIN HOADLY, the subject of the present memoir, emigrated to America about the year 1639. His son, Samuel Hoadly, was born two years after at Guilford, Connecticut. The family remained in that place fourteen years, and then went back to England. From that period little is known of the grandfather, except that he became chaplain to the garrison of Edinburgh Castle.

His son Samuel was educated at King James's College, Edinburgh, and at an early age commenced the employment of schoolmaster. He followed this vocation in different places, till he was called to be head master of the public school at Norwich, which station he held during the remainder of his life. He was the friend and correspondent of Graevius, and several of his letters to that eminent critic have been preserved.

BENJAMIN HOADLY, son of Samuel Hoadly, was born at Westerhaven, Kent, November 14th, 1676,

while his father was teacher of a private school in that place. He continued under his father's tuition till he entered the University of Cambridge, as a pensioner of Catherine hall. We hear little of him at the University, except that he took his degrees in due course, was elected a fellow, and discharged the office of tutor with much credit for two years.

During the first years of his life he was of a sickly constitution, and seldom in good health. By an accident also at the University he contracted a lameness, which never left him. He always walked with a cane, or a crutch, and then with difficulty. But his constitution gained vigour as he advanced in age. It was a custom, which he rarely omitted, to exercise daily by riding in the open air. This practice preserved his health and cheerfulness to the close of a long and sedentary life.

He took orders in 1700, and was appointed lecturer at St Mildred in the Poultry, London. This appointment he retained for ten years. The income was very small, and through the kindness of Dr William Sherlock, Dean of St Paul's, he obtained in addition the Rectory of St Peter's Poor, Broadstreet, in 1704. Already he began to be distinguished by his writings and sermons in vindication of natural and revealed religion, and of the principles of civil and religious liberty. So valuable were his services accounted, that, in 1709, he was complimented by a vote of approbation in the House of

Commons, and recommended to the Queen as worthy of advancement in the church. The Queen promised to comply with the wishes of the House, but she never found an opportunity to fulfil her promise.

By Mrs Howland he was presented to the Rectory of Streatham, Surry. As a qualification for this appointment, he became chaplain to the Duke of Bedford. The degree of doctor of divinity was conferred on him by Archbishop Wake, and, when George I. came to the throne, he was appointed king's chaplain. He had warmly espoused the cause of the Hanover succession, and deserved the patronage of a family, whose interests he had so earnestly defended. In 1715 he was advanced to the bishopric of Bangor, and, in the course of the twenty years following, he was appointed successively bishop of Hereford, Salisbury, and Winchester. He died, 1761, at his residence in Chelsea, aged eighty five years.

Bishop Hoadly was twice married, and had five children. One of his sons became an eminent physician, and was the author of several works of merit in his profession, as well as of the popular comedy, called the Suspicious Husband. He died before his father. Another son, John Hoadly, obtained considerable preferment in the church, and after his father's death published a complete collection of his works in three folio volumes. It is remarkable,

that, on the death of this person, the name of Hoadly became extinct. The younger brother of bishop Hoadly, who was Primate of Ireland, left no male descendants.

Justice could hardly be done to a biographical notice of Hoadly without detailing many of the most important events in England, both ecclesiastical and civil, for nearly half a century. His writings had a wide and powerful influence, and contributed much to give a tone to public sentiment and feeling. They were admirably suited to the times, and in the multitude of topics, which they embrace, we always discover the same strong intellect, clear perception, forcible argument, and plain, practical sense. In religion, he admitted no authority but the Scriptures; in civil government, he built every thing on the foundation of liberty and right. This was a bold stand to take at the end of the seventeenth century; and to maintain it with dignity required a firmness and zeal, as well as a weight of talents, not among the attributes of a common mind.

Hoadly's earliest writings are chiefly devoted to a defence of the reasonableness of conformity to the church of England. On this subject he was engaged in a controversy with Calamy, an able and learned divine among the dissenters. Hoadly argued for conformity on protestant principles, and not from the traditionary notion of hereditary right, nor from the pretence of any authority in the church, except what it

derived from the good conduct and worthy character of its ministers. He desired peace and union, and attempted to show, that, whatever might be the abuses of the established church, they were not such as to interfere with the essentials of religion, nor as ought to drive any serious christian from its outward forms and usages. He did not make it his object so much to prove the truth of doctrines, or the propriety of particular ceremonies, as to show, on the ground assumed by dissenters themselves, that no doctrines or ceremonies of the church were a necessary bar to such a conformity, as would ensure peace and harmony among christians.

This was stating the argument on broad and liberal principles. It was pursued with candour and forcible reasoning; but it will scarcely be denied, that the author sometimes lays a heavy tax on his ingenuity, and refines upon his subject in a manner more plausible than convincing. The discussion, however, was serviceable to the interests of religion. It excited public attention, and proved to both parties, that the differences between them were much fewer in number, and less in importance, than they had imagined. It had a tendency to promote inquiry, remove prejudice, and encourage mutual respect and esteem. There is no better method of subduing the rancour of party spirit, than to make men perfectly acquainted with each other's sentiments. They will always discover, that they are not so far asunder.

as a lively fancy and a few exaggerated representations had induced them to suppose.

Hoadly next entered the lists of controversy with bishop Atterbury, respecting the tendency of virtue and morality to promote the present happiness of man. In a published sermon, Atterbury had maintained, that, if there were no life after the present, the condition of man would be worse than that of the brutes, and that the best men would often be the most miserable. Hoadly considered this a dangerous doctrine, and opposed to the nature and true dignity of virtue. He proved it to be a sound position in morals, that virtue will always be in some degree its own reward, and that, under any conditions of human existence, the best men will be on the whole the most happy. The controversy took a wide range, and several of Atterbury's sentiments were attacked as unscriptural, and inconsistent with themselves. In short, there were but few points of agreement between these eminent men. They disputed on passive obedience, and other topics peculiar to the religious and political state of the times. Hoadly was in favour of the sentence of perpetual exile passed against Atterbury by the House of Lords, on a charge of being engaged in a conspiracy to restore the Stuart family.

In the year 1717 Hoadly preached before the king his celebrated Sermon on the *Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ*. With this discourse

commenced the famous *Bangorian Controversy*, so called from the circumstance of the author's being at that time bishop of Bangor. As this sermon embraced all the important topics then pertaining to the relations subsisting between church and state, it brought into action, on one side or another, many of the most able and learned men in the kingdom. No controversy, probably, ever attracted so much attention for the time it continued, nor enlisted so large a number of combatants. Hoadly was attacked from every quarter. He was put upon his defence against Sherlock, Snape, Hare, Potter, Wake, Cannon, Law, and a host of others. In all these contests he acquitted himself with great dignity and credit.

It was the purpose of the author, in the sermon which gave occasion to this controversy, to make it appear from the Scriptures, that the kingdom of Christ is in all respects a spiritual kingdom, in which Christ himself is the only king and lawgiver. Temporal governments and laws have no just control in this kingdom. The authority of Christ and his Apostles demands our undivided respect and submission. Human penalties and encouragements to enforce religious assent are not consistent with the principles of the Gospel. They may produce a unity of profession, but not of faith; they may make hypocrites, but not sincere christians.

These sentiments were thought by many to be a direct attack on all religious establishments, and especially on that of the church of England. They were not intended as such by the author. He approved establishments under certain conditions and modifications, and defended most ably all that was defensible in the English church. Yet we cannot wonder, that tenets like these should have met with strenuous opposition from the credulous and timid on the one hand, and from the discerning, bigoted, and suspicious on the other.

So great was the offence taken by the body of the clergy at the sentiments contained in this sermon, that it was resolved to proceed against the author in Convocation, as soon as it should be convened. The Lower House appointed a committee to draw up a Representation, which was unanimously accepted. But, when the king saw to what unreasonable lengths the clergy were suffering themselves to be carried, he exercised his royal authority, and prorogued the Convocation, before the subject was brought into the Upper House. At this period may be dated the downfall of the Convocation. It has never met since, except on business of form; and if the Bangorian Controversy had resulted in no other good, it would have been no trifling achievement to destroy the power of this engine of persecution and ecclesiastical tyranny.

A short time before this controversy commenced, Hoadly wrote a *Dedication to the Pope*, which, for a deep knowledge of human nature, for wit and grave satire, has seldom been surpassed. It was prefixed to a short treatise by Sir Richard Steele, entitled, *The Romish Ecclesiastical History of late Years*. This work professes to be a translation of an Italian manuscript, giving an account of the ceremonies attending a canonization of saints at Rome. The original narrative is occasionally broken by humorous descriptions and pointed reflections of the translator, designed to place in a strong light the absurdity and imposture of those ceremonies. The *Dedication* appeared in Steele's name, and went out to the public as his own, although some few persons were in the secret.

When the real author was generally known, Steele was severely censured, particularly by Hare and Swift, for shining in this borrowed dress. Hare, as the account says, "looked with an evil eye on this piece, as if his own province of wit were invaded;" and Swift could not let so good an opportunity pass without taking his usual mode of revenge by hooking the matter into a rhyme, in which he holds up Steele as one,

— who owned what others writ,
And flourished by imputed wit.

The *Dedication* never was published in Hoadly's name during his lifetime, but it is contained in the

folio edition of his works. The following is an extract from a letter written by Hoadly to Lady Sundon nearly twenty years after the Dedication first appeared. "I remember, when I last waited on you at Kensington, you were willing to see a certain Dedication, which you could not find among your books. Be pleased to accept of this; and, as you read it, remember that it had never been printed, if it had not been first read over, and received the approbation of some of the best judges, in your parlour. Call to mind the excesses of joy with which Dr Clarke then received it." This extract, the testimony of his son, and the general consent of his friends, are a sufficient proof that he was the author of the Dedication, although he never published it with his name.

Besides his controversial and political writings, Hoadly published several works of value as aids to practical religion and a right understanding of the Scriptures. His discourses on the Terms of Acceptance with God are founded on the rational and scriptural principles of moral ability in man, and of human freedom and accountableness. He portrays the danger and folly into which some christians are prone to run by indulging a secret hope of divine favour on other terms, than a holy life and absolute obedience. He rejects all substitutes for practical virtue and piety, whether they are supposed to be excessive zeal, a capacious faith, or imputed righ-

teousness. The scripture motives are urged with earnestness and perspicuity, and every man is called on, as a free agent, to comply with the terms of salvation, and render himself a worthy object of divine favour.

At an early period of his life he wrote, besides pieces in defence of miracles and prophecy, four excellent sermons on impartial inquiry in religion. He published two or three volumes of discourses, and many single sermons at different times ; and also a life of Dr Samuel Clarke, prefixed to an edition of his sermons.

But one of his most celebrated and laboured performances was, *A Plain account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. The character and objects of this work may be understood from the following remarks of the author. "As, for the sake of one sort of christians," says he, "I never ceased to inculcate the necessity of universal obedience to the will of God, that there might be no hope left to them of acceptance without this ; so, for the defence and support of others in their sincere endeavours to please God, against all those uneasy impressions of superstition, which they had a right to be freed from, I made it my care to state and explain the commands peculiar to christianity, from the first declarations of Christ himself and his Apostles, in such a manner, as that they might appear to honest minds to have as little tendency to create distress and uneasiness, as they were designed in their first sim-

plicity to have." Of the same work, Dr Middleton observes, in a letter to Lord Hervey, "I like both the design and the doctrine, as I do every design of reconciling religion with reason, or, where that may not be done, of bringing them as near together as possible. His enemies will insult him with the charge of lessening christian piety, but the candid will see, that he only seeks to destroy a superstitious devotion by establishing a rational one in its place."

As the Plain Account is elaborate and not well adapted to common use, it was abridged and put into a more popular form by Dr Disney.

The last publication of Hoadly was a very spirited letter, written after he was eighty years old, vindicating himself from misrepresentations, which had gone abroad by reason of an impostor having forged a note against him. This letter was considered a remarkable performance, both in regard to its ability, and the knowledge it discovered of the technical mysteries of the law. Horace Walpole said, in alluding to it, "the bishop has not only got the better of his adversary, but of his old age." The humanity and kind temper of the writer towards the person, who had attempted to deceive and defraud him, are not the least striking excellences of this vindication.

We have to regret, that no good biography of Hoadly has ever appeared. The sketch in the Biographia Britannica, which is copied into the folio edition of his works, is meagre beyond description.

It is rich only in dates and genealogies. His character was drawn in his lifetime with considerable fidelity, discernment, and elegance, by Balguy in a dedication prefixed to a volume of tracts. An anonymous hand, in another dedication, passed a high encomium on the bishop's virtues, and on his zeal and labour in the cause of liberty. But even from these sources we can derive no more than imperfect hints, and gain but a feeble perception of his true character as displayed in his works and his life.

Dr Akenside wrote an ode to Hoadly, in which he has not been unsuccessful in portraying some of the bolder features of his character. The lines quoted below may not be thought unappropriate in the present connexion.

O nurse of freedom, Albion, say,
 Thou tamer of despotic sway,
 What man among thy sons around,
 Thus heir to glory hast thou found?
 What page, in all thy annals bright,
 Hast thou with purer joy surveyed,
 Than that where truth, by Hoadly's aid,
 Shines through imposture's solemn shade,
 Through kingly, and through sacerdotal night?

For not a conqueror's sword,
 Nor the strong powers to civil founders known,
 Were his; but truth by faithful search explored,
 And social sense, like seed, in genial plenty sown.
 Wherever it took root, the soul, restored
 To freedom, freedom too for others sought.
 Not monkish craft the tyrant's claim divine,
 Nor regal zeal the bigot's cruel shrine,

Could longer guard from reason's warfare sage ;
Not the wild rabble to sedition wrought,
Nor synods by the papal genius taught,
Nor St John's spirit loose, nor Atterbury's rage.

The influence, which such a mind as Hoadly's must have had, in destroying the delusion and power of a false religion, and in establishing the principles of a rational faith and freedom, cannot be realized without going back and taking a minute survey of the times when he commenced his career, and following him step by step through all his arduous labours and noble designs. Christianity has profited by his wisdom and talents, his judgment and resolution. What he gained was durable ; it has never been lost ; and he gained much. No man has been more successful in restoring reason to its true office, and in proving the religion of Jesus to be adapted to the human understanding and practice. He gave a new impulse to the cause of the Reformation. Those who have come after him in the same work have been strengthened by his achievements, and encouraged by his success.

If all christians had the same love of truth and liberty, as Hoadly, the same aversion to bigotry, superstition, and prejudice ; if all were as firm and resolute, as zealous and active in correcting abuses and resisting encroachments ; if all were as ready to defend the universal right of private thought, judgment, and belief, and to recognize a true christian in

every sincere believer ; we might safely and joyfully anticipate the time, when the religion of the Gospel would be restored to its primitive truth, purity, and power. The example of such a man is an honour to human nature ; it is a pattern which cannot be too much admired and imitated. His name is bright in the annals of departed time ; it is adorned with the trophies of wisdom and the emblems of virtuous action ; let it be revered by the wise and the good.

DEDICATION TO THE POPE.

TO HIS HOLINESS CLEMENT XI.

YOUR Holiness will be surprised at so uncommon a thing, as an address of this nature, from one, who is, in your account, and in the language of your church, a schismatic, heretic, and infidel. But, as I think it my duty to make this public restitution of the following treatise, which I acknowledge myself to have clandestinely procured; so I will restore it fourfold, with all possible advantage to you and your church.

I find that all the infallibility, with which your Holiness is illuminated, doth not disdain the help of human information; and that your accounts of the religious, as well as civil, state of this kingdom, are in a particular manner defective; and therefore I have resolved to act the part of a generous adversary, and without reserve to lay before you, out of the fulness of my heart, such things, as will give you a juster information of the state we of these

nations are in, than any of your predecessors in the Holy See ever enjoyed ; and this, without any further ceremony, just in the order in which they shall arise in my own mind.

Your Holiness is not perhaps aware, how near the churches of us Protestants have at length come to those privileges and perfections, which you boast of, as peculiar to your own. So near, that many of the most quicksighted and sagacious persons have not been able to discover any other difference between us, as to the main principle of all doctrine, government, worship, and discipline, but this one, viz. that you *cannot* err in any thing you determine, and we never *do*. That is, in other words, that you are infallible, and we always in the right. We cannot but esteem the advantage to be exceedingly on our side, in this case, because we have all the benefits of *infallibility*, without the absurdity of pretending to it ; and without the uneasy task of maintaining a point so shocking to the understanding of mankind. And you must pardon us, if we cannot help thinking it to be as great and as glorious a privilege in *us* to be always in the right, without the pretence to infallibility, as it can be in *you* to be always in the wrong with it.

Thus the Synod of Dort, for whose unerring decisions, public thanks to almighty God are every three years offered up, with the greatest solemnity, by the magistrates in that country ; the Councils of

the Reformed in France ; the Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland ; and, if I may presume to name it, the Convocation of England, have been all found to have the very same unquestionable authority, which your church claims solely upon the infallibility which resides in it ; and the people, to be under the very same strict obligation of obedience to their determinations, which, with you, is the consequence only of an absolute infallibility. The reason, therefore, why we do not openly set up an infallibility, is because we can do without it. Authority results as well from power, as from right ; and a majority of votes is as strong a foundation for it, as infallibility itself. Councils that *may* err, never *do* ; and besides, being composed of men, whose peculiar business it is to be in the right, it is very immodest for any private person to think them not so ; because this is to set up a private corrupted understanding, above a public uncorrupted judgment.

Thus it is in the north, as well as the south ; abroad, as well as at home. All maintain the exercise of the same authority in themselves ; which yet they know not how so much as to speak of without ridicule in others.

In England it stands thus. The synod of Dort is of no weight ; it determined many doctrines wrong. The assembly of Scotland hath nothing of a true authority, and is very much out in its scheme of doctrines, worship, and government. But the church

of England is vested with all authority, and justly challengeth all obedience.

If one crosses a river in the north, there it stands thus. The church of England is not enough reformed; its doctrines, worship, and government have too much of antichristian Rome in them. But the kirk of Scotland hath a divine right, from its only head, Christ Jesus, to meet and to enact what to it shall seem fit, for the good of his church.

Thus we left you for your enormous, unjustifiable claim to an unerring spirit, and have found out a way, unknown to your Holiness and your predecessors, of claiming all the rights that belong to infallibility, even whilst we disclaim and abjure the thing itself.

As for us of the Church of England, if we will believe many of its greatest advocates, we have bishops in a succession as certainly uninterrupted from the Apostles, as your church could communicate it to us. And upon this bottom, which makes us a true church, we have a right to separate from you; but no persons living have any right to differ or separate from us. And they again, who differ from us, value themselves upon something or other, in which we are supposed defective; or upon being free from some superfluities which we enjoy; and think it hard, that any will be still going farther, and refine upon their scheme of worship and discipline.

Thus we have indeed left you ; but we have fixed ourselves in your seat ; and make no scruple to resemble you, in our defences of ourselves and censures of others, whenever we think it proper.

We have all sufficiently felt the load of the two topics of *heresy* and *schism*. We have been persecuted, hanged, burnt, massacred, as your Holiness well knows, for heretics and schismatics. But all this hath not made us sick of those two words. We can still throw them about us and play them off upon others as plentifully and as fiercely, as they are dispensed to us from your quarter. It often puts me in mind, (your holiness must allow me to be a little ludicrous, if you admit me to your conversation,) it often, I say, puts me in mind of a play which I have seen amongst some merry people ; a man strikes his next neighbour with all his force, and he, instead of returning it to the man who gave it, communicates it with equal zeal and strength to another ; and this to another ; and so it circulates, till it returns perhaps to him who set the sport agoing. Thus your Holiness begins the attack. You call us heretics and schismatics, and burn and destroy us as such ; though God knows there is no more right any where to use heretics or schismatics barbarously, than those who think and speak as their superiors bid them. But so it is, you thunder out the sentence against us. We think it ill manners to give it you back again ; but we throw it out

upon the next brethren that come in our way ; and they upon others ; and so it goes round, till some perhaps have sense and courage enough to throw it back upon those who first began the disturbance, by pretending to authority where there can be none.

We have not, indeed, now the power of burning heretics, as our forefathers of the reformation had. The civil power hath taken away the act, which continued that glorious privilege to them, upon the remonstrance of several persons, that they could not sleep whilst that act was awake. But then every thing on this side death still remains untouched to us ; we can molest, harass, imprison, and ruin any man who pretends to be wiser than his betters. And the more unspotted the man's character is, the more necessary we think it to take such crushing methods. Since the toleration hath been authorized in these nations, the legal zeal of men hath fallen the heavier upon heretics, (for it must always, it seems, be exercised upon some sort of persons or other ;) and, amongst these, chiefly upon such as differ from us in points, in which, above all others, a difference of opinion is most allowable ; such as are acknowledged to be very abstruse and unintelligible, and to have been in all ages thought of and judged of with the same difference and variety.

Sometimes we of the established church can manage a prosecution (for I must not call it a persecution) ourselves, without calling in any other help.

But I must do the dissenting Protestants the justice to say, that they have shown themselves, upon occasion, very ready to assist us in so pious and christian a work, as bringing heretics to their right mind; being themselves but very lately come from experiencing the convincing and enlightening faculty of a dungeon, or a fine. The difference between these two sorts of persons is this. The one differ from us about ceremonies of worship and government; but they boggle not at all at the doctrine settled for us by our first reformers; it is all with them right and good, just as Christ left it at first, and Calvin found it above fifteen hundred years afterwards. The others, unhappy men, look upon this to be straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel. However, the former sort, having a toleration for their own way upon subscribing all our doctrines, can the more easily come to persuade themselves, that the christian world is unhinged, if the latter should be tolerated in their opposition to doctrines which have been called fundamentals, even by Protestants, for so many years.

This hath been experienced particularly in Ireland, by one who could not see exactly what they saw about the nature of Christ before his appearance in this world. For, as with you, a man had better blaspheme Almighty God, than not magnify the blessed Virgin; so, with many of us, it is much more innocent and less hazardous, to take from the glory

of the Father, than of his Son. Nay, to bring down the Father to a level with his own Son, is a commendable work, and the applauded labour of many learned men of leisure ; but to place the Son below his own Father, in any degree of real perfection, this is an unpardonable error ; so unpardonable that all hands were united against that unhappy man. And he found at length that he had much better have violated all God's commandments, than have interpreted some passages of Scripture differently from his brethren. The Nonconformists accused him ; the Conformists condemned him ; the secular power was called in ; and the cause ended in an imprisonment, and a very great fine. Two methods of conviction, about which the Gospel is silent.*

In Scotland, let a man depart an inch from the confession of faith and rule of worship established by the assembly there ; and he will quickly find,

* [The person here alluded to was the Rev. Thomas Emlyn, who was several years settled as a dissenting minister in Dublin. He was an Arian in sentiment, and so violent did the popular feeling become against him on account of his religious opinions, that he was arraigned before a judicial tribunal, tried, and condemned to suffer imprisonment and pay a heavy fine.

He remained in prison two years ; and, when released, he went over to England, in 1705, about ten years before this *Dedication to the Pope* was written. He preached to a small congregation in London till age and infirmities compelled him to retire. He was a friend of Whiston and Clarke, and highly respected for his learning and virtues. He died 1743, aged seventy eight.

EDITOR.]

that, as cold a country as it is, it will be too hot for him to live in. Infants are baptized there, not only into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; but into the pure doctrine professed and settled by the church of Scotland. To suppose, therefore, any point of doctrine to be erroneous, or so much as a subject for a new examination, in so unspotted a church, is a token of malignity and infidelity; and the man, who doth it, must be content to escape out of their hands as well as he can.

In England, it is not all the other excellencies in the world, united in one man, that can guard him against the fatal consequences of heresy, or differing in some opinions from the current notions of our world, especially if those opinions are such as are allowed to be mysterious and inexplicable. We have now an instance of one or two learned and otherwise good men, who have thought it their duty, as they themselves say, to step aside out of the common path. And what their fate will be, time must show. At present, the zeal, as it is called, of their adversaries prevails. The fire is kindled, and how far it will consume or where it will stop, God only knows. But the case of one of them, which will give your Holiness some notion how we stand affected, is very remarkable.* For, not to mention his

* [Rev. William Whiston. He was educated at Clare hall, Cambridge, and succeeded Sir Isaac Newton as professor of mathematics in that university. He took orders in the church,

good life, which is looked upon but as a trifle, common to almost all modern heretics; though his religion is mixed up with a good deal of Kalendar and Rubrical piety; though he hath his stated fasts and feasts, which he observes with the greatest devotion; though he is zealous for building of churches in the Apostolical form of a ship with all accommodations for order and decency; though he is for the use of oil and the trine immersion in baptism, and for water mixed with wine in the other sacrament; though he is very warm for believing in Christ towards the east, and renouncing the devil towards the west; though he hath laid them a foundation for independent church power in the decrees of the Apostles themselves; nay, though he joins with them in beating down human reason when it would pretend to judge in matters of religion; and resigns to them all the preferments in the land from Dover to Berwick upon Tweed; yet all will not do.

and was appointed a lecturer. But in 1706 he embraced Arian sentiments. This change in his opinions caused him to be expelled from the university, and deprived of his professorship.

After this he took up his residence in London, where he published from time to time a great number of books on mathematics, philosophy, and theology, and gave public lectures on various subjects. He died 1752, at the advanced age of eighty five. He was a man of amiable temper, goodness of heart, and great simplicity of manners. Some of his opinions were visionary and whimsical. His writings discover originality of genius, but more fancy than judgment, and more erudition than sound reasoning. EDITOR.]

He holds the Son to be inferior to the Father, and created by him, though a being of most glorious perfections; and upon this account he must not enjoy even the poverty, which he hath chosen, in quiet. And, if this be his case, what has another to expect who has not these advantages on his side, though he should be found armed with unspotted integrity and unequalled learning and judgment?*

Your Holiness will judge from hence, how the matter of heresy stands amongst us; and how it must stand, unless my lords the bishops, who have with an unexampled courage preserved our liberties

* [Dr Samuel Clarke. After publishing his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* in 1712, he was charged with entertaining heterodox opinions, and a formal complaint was made against him to the bishops by the lower house of convocation. Much violence was at first manifested on the occasion, but the good sense and moderation of the bishops quelled the storm. The affair was suffered gradually to subside.

To objections urged against some parts of his book, Dr Clarke wrote a reply, the spirit of which was by no means consistent with his usual manliness and independence. A controversy was kept up for some time on the general subject of the work, in which Dr Waterland took an active part in opposition to Dr Clarke. The convocation was prudent enough to meddle no further in the affair, but left it to the scrutiny and judgment of the public.

Not long after this, Dr Clarke gave great offence to the bishop of London, by making an alteration in the doxologies usually sung in the church. A warm dispute ensued, but no other censure was inflicted, than a circular letter from the bishop, forbidding the clergy of his diocess to use any new forms of doxology. EDITOR.]

in civil matters, with equal resolution step in, and oppose that spirit which, from such beginnings at first amongst you, proceeded farther and farther, till it broke out into fire and massacre for God's glory and the good of his church.

And, as I observed before, that there was no need for your pretending to infallibility; that it is better taken in the world, and as easy, to establish the same authority without it; so, here, it will be obvious to those of your church to observe, that there was no manner of necessity upon them to discard the Scriptures as a rule of faith open to all christians, and to set up the church in distinction to them; because they may see plainly now that the same feats are to be performed and with more decency, (though not with more consistency, of which few are judges,) without carrying things to such extremity. For, at the same time that we are warmly contending, against *your* disputants, for the right of the people to search and consider the Gospel themselves, it is but taking care, in some other of our controversies, to fix it upon them, that they must not abuse this right; that they must not pretend to be wiser than their superiors; that they must take care to understand particular texts as the church understands them, and as their guides, who have an *interpretative authority*, explain them.

This we find to be as effectual with many, as taking the Scriptures out of their hands. And,

because it is done in this gentlemanlike manner and gives them an opportunity of showing their humility, it passeth very smoothly off, without their considering once the absurdity it leads to ; that, as doctors differ and councils too, this method layeth a necessity upon two different men, nay, upon the same man in different circumstances, to understand the same text in two different and often in two contradictory senses.

And here again, with submission, I think we greatly surpass you in our conduct. For *we* have the same definitive authority, which *you* have, without the reproach of depreciating the word of God ; the people all the while being fully satisfied that we allow the Scripture to be their rule and to lie open to them all. And we do indeed in words preserve all authority to the Scripture ; but with great dexterity we substitute in fact our own explanations, and doctrines drawn from those explanations, instead of it.

And then, one great privilege we enjoy above you ; that every particular pastor amongst us is vested with the plenary authority of an ambassador from God ; very much different from the maxims of your church.

For my own part, I have always been an advocate for all that reverence and regard, which can with any justice be claimed by them ; and shall ever pay them all the respect which their character and conduct, compared together, can admit of. But the

demands of those, who talk loudest amongst them, seem to increase upon us every day. For, upon inquiry, I find, what I was not before acquainted with, that what was spoken to the Apostles, was spoken to every one of them ; that it is a crime not to attend to them, even without excepting the case of self-contradiction, mutual contradiction, and, what is of much more importance, of contradiction to all the precepts of peace and love in the Gospel ; that they are at length of an angelic order ; nay, that to despise them, not excepting any cases in which contempt is as natural as hunger or thirst, is, if I may repeat it, to despise God himself. And all this, because fallible men, in whom that trust is reposed, have admitted them, according to the best of their judgment, to officiate in holy things.

Every one, who thinks of himself in this light, needs no infallibility or impeccability, to make him as great as ever your Holiness pretended to be. His character will do without those or any one other accomplishment.

These last four or five years, our pulpits have in a particular manner echoed with the sound of dignity, rule, preeminence, and the like. There are, indeed, amongst the best and most learned of our divines, who disclaim all this, and disdain all respect but what results from the sincerity of their labours for the good of mankind. But the noisy make most noise every where, and few care to contradict them.

This privilege I thought worth recording in the account I am giving you of our religious affairs, because it is very considerable in itself and seems to be of a growing nature. It is a point, which, when once carried thoroughly and universally, will make every single presbyter or pastor an absolute Pope to his own congregation.

And this alone is sufficient to convince you, that at present, notwithstanding any intelligence you may have of their good inclinations towards you, they mean not you, but themselves. They may be surprised, indeed, at last, to find it all end to your advantage. But I acquit them of the guilt of any such design; and, indeed, of any other view but that of securing an immoderate respect to a particular set of themselves. Which I would not say, were it not too plain from hence, that, let a presbyter or a bishop or even an archbishop differ from them in any matter of speculation or of state; they have shown the world by their example that all this pretended veneration is to be turned, whenever the signal is given, into personal contempt and ignominy. So that to say and unsay, to do and undo, to declare absolutely that the profoundest reverence is due to the clergy, and at the same time to raise a storm of ill treatment against any of their own body who displease them; and all the while to keep their countenances and look as if all was consistent, is one

signal privilege, which many amongst us have to boast of.

It is very true, what your Holiness may have been informed of, that in many instances both of doctrine and ceremony we have been, of late years, rather drawing nearer to you than departing farther from you.

It is a common maxim, and propagated very politiciely by the agents of your church with the help of some of the zealots of ours; 'better be a papist than a presbyterian.' This, being allowed by many churchmen and rightly managed among the populace, exceedingly diminishes the horror and aversion, there used to be in our people against the very name of popery. And this works by insensible degrees; till many a man, who at first feels himself a hearty enemy to popery, finding it to be allowed to be better than something else of which he knows nothing, begins to think with more patience about it; first, as not near so bad as it used to be represented, and then as an innocent matter, and then as a very tolerable religion, and, at length, as better than any thing set up against it; and all by the help of this general principle rightly managed, which takes off the edge of his former passion for the protestant religion, and so by degrees reconciles his thoughts to its contrary.

To the same purpose tends the revival of some matters of doctrine and practice of your sort amongst

us. The power vested in priests to absolve men from their sins, hath been declared by many in such sort, as hath in effect made the will of God himself to be determined by their will, or even their humour. It may be summed up in these two points; 'that men can have no hopes of a pardon from God, but by absolution from the mouth of a priest, and a priest ordained to a nicety according to a particular notion of regularity; and that God must pardon those whom a priest pronounces to be pardoned;' that is, that they are not so much obliged by almighty God's will, as almighty God is by their's, and that God is never so much honoured, as when weak and fallible men are placed in his throne.

Some have changed this absurdity of an *authoritative absolution*, which they see they cannot so easily defend, into an *authoritative intercession* of the priest, who is now become with us a mediator between God and man; still securing to themselves the same power and privilege in a less scandalous manner. This creates the same dependence of the laity upon the priests, and shows again how dexterous we are in changing words, when there is occasion, without changing things at all.

But your Holiness will easily guess the meaning of all this, when I let you know that the same persons declare, that auricular confession, and a particular unburthening the conscience of all its secrets, must precede the great benefit. And this, you well

know, is an engine of an unmeasurable influence, that can rule families, and overturn states, and govern the world.

Add to this another point greatly contended for of late, and very much to your advantage in the issue ; that all baptisms, unless by Episcopal priests in a regular line from you, are declared invalid and of no effect to instate men in God's *peculium*.

We have, indeed, openly declared against your doctrine of making the sacraments depend upon the intention of the priest ; but we are doing a much worse thing, if the doctrine of some men can prevail, and that is, making them depend upon what neither priest nor layman can ever come to any satisfaction about, viz. the Episcopal ordination of the priest in a regular, uninterrupted line of succession from Christ himself. This, indeed, sweeps whole parishes away at once, which perhaps have had preachers never ordained, and unpeoples the christian world without mercy. But it is supposed it must make the poor distressed laity adore the men, who have this privilege of entitling them to God's favour, or debarring them from it.

Yet, with some, it may be turned another way ; and they may begin to ask, if the clergy of our church, which received all through the hands of the Romish, be vested with this glorious prerogative ; how much more sure is it in that church which communicated it to ours ? If we are so positive we had it from

them, by whom we were ordained, and could not have it otherwise, how much more must it be in them who ordained us ?

After this, why should I mention, what must be known to you, the zeal of many for the multiplying of ceremoniousness and bowings in public worship ; for the cathedral pronunciation of prayers (which is the protestant unknown tongue to such as are not accustomed to it ;) our altars and the never-lighted candles upon them ; the decorations of our churches which, you have experienced, never stop where the honest men, who first begin them, design they should ; the consecration of our church yards, and the like ; in which you find this benefit ; that several, who take the impression of these things deep into them, are easily inclined, with a little art and management, to believe that church must be the best, which hath the greatest number of these good things.

We have not, indeed, many images or pictures left in our churches besides Moses and Aaron, whose figures, though they have nothing to do in our places of worship, give me the less concern, because christians are in no danger of idolizing Jews.

But we have one very common and very scandalous representation, in multitudes of our churches, which, in my opinion, comprehends all possible absurdities of that sort ; and that is, of the trinity in unity, figured in a triangle, and generally inclosed in

a circle, over our altars, as it is in the pictures which are now become fashionable in our common prayer books. This is justly esteemed the most inexplicable and unintelligible mystery of our faith. And yet it is suffered by those, who so esteem it, to be set forth even to men's eyes by a mathematical figure, which always supposeth the clearest and fullest ideas possible; and the eternal Father of all things is represented to christians as one side of an equilateral triangle. In this point I am almost ready to give up the cause to you, and to own that all your crucifixes, and all the figures of your saints, who were once men and women and therefore representable, put together, have not any part of the monstrous absurdity of this single representation.

The preaching, as it is called, of our popular men, upon which we used to value ourselves exceedingly, is now come to that degree of offence, that in many places persons of sense and seriousness stay at home out of piety, and absent themselves from our assemblies for fear of hearing. For the truth of what I affirm, I appeal to the intelligence sent you by the agents of your church amongst us, who have of late been seen to take notes from the mouths of some of our followed preachers. For my own part, I have imagined myself sometimes to be at the late negotiations at Utrecht, and to hear one of the French king's plenipotentiaries setting forth the glorious and advantageous terms of peace, which

his master hath yielded to us ; sometimes to be in the midst of commissioners of trade, hearing the terms of our commerce extolled to heaven ; sometimes at the funeral of a late princess, and my ears filled with the sound of fulsome panegyric ; sometimes, in a cabal of malecontent jacobites, disburthening all their spleen, as far as they dare, in invective and satire and insinuation, against the late revolution and their present superiors ; sometimes in one of the meetings of some of our old rigid separatists, inveighing against their bishops ; sometimes in one of your Holiness' courts of judicature amidst the thunderings of wrath and damnation denounced against all heretics and schismatics ; in a word, sometimes at the Bear Garden, and sometimes at Bedlam ; but at last I have roused myself up, and found myself where I should least of all expect to hear either such subjects or such language.

About the end of January and the beginning of February, we are, in a more than ordinary manner, called upon to knock one another on the head, because our forefathers, and particularly the forefathers of many of our modern high church champions, happened to be great villains above sixty years ago ; and this is thought an excellent topic to be insisted upon from generation to generation ; nay, it is esteemed by many to be seasonable all the year round.

But there is another topic which seems to be in great repute again at this time, and that is, the danger of the poor church; a danger, which constantly is seen to increase in exact proportion, as the hopes and interest of your Holiness' friends in these parts decrease. So that, to know whether this subject be in fashion, no one need to inquire any thing but how it stands with the Roman Catholics in England, whether they are pleased or displeas'd. Some advantage, I can assure you, your church reaps from it; that it hath created a nauseous disgust in many of the best members of our's, and hath furnished some of our dissenters with this reason against uniting with us, *that they never will be of a church that is almost always in danger.*

One thing more I must here mention; that the church, I mean that part of the churchmen I am speaking of, is now in full possession of the privilege of applying God's judgments to their neighbours; which our forefathers so justly condemn'd, and took such pains to ridicule, in the worst of our separatists.

Thus, the death of our late queen is a judgment upon a nation, unworthy of so much goodness; though some weak fanatics on the other side have showed them how easy it is for any to interpret judgments in their own favour, by observing that she died the very day upon which the late schism act, designed, as they think, to rob them of a natural right, took place.

After king Charles the Second's restoration, the fire which destroyed the whole city, immediately following the plague which consumed vast numbers of its inhabitants, furnished matter for this humour. How easy was it found to make these to be great judgments upon account of that very restoration. Now the same impious humour, which is the very essence of fanaticism, let it be in what church it will, can do with a thousand times smaller matters. A fire not to be named with that, a mortality amongst our cattle, which all Europe hath felt much more grievously; these are not only declared to be God's judgments (as without doubt they are;) but it is sufficiently and plainly insinuated that they are judgments, not for their own sins, their own private enormities, or public ingratitude to heaven for their security, (for they never think of themselves in this view,) but for *something at court, which should not be there*; which all the world knows how to interpret.

Thus hath fanaticism its vicissitudes, like the other things of this world; sometimes reigning in the church, and sometimes out of it, sometimes against it, and sometimes for it. And thus is it come to pass amongst us, that preaching their own passions and indignation and resentment, under their disappointed expectations, is called, by too many, preaching the gospel and delivering messages from heaven.

Your Holiness must not judge from hence that this is universal. I can assure you, we have some

still amongst us, who truly deserve the name of preachers of the Gospel ; some still left, of whom the world is not worthy, and of whom the world seems to think itself not worthy ; for those, whom I have before described, are the mighty men of popularity, that draw the affections, and raise the passions, of the multitude. This disadvantage, however, they have, which your Holiness' agents, who help to move the machine, would do well to put them in mind of ; that the times are changed, and that there is not now one at the helm, who will either support them in their exorbitances, or betray the administration into their hands.

I return now to other subjects. One great privilege we acknowledge there is, which you enjoy above us, that your material churches, as soon as they are consecrated to the service of God, are exempt from all human power whatever. They become immediately the refuge of the worst part of mankind, they fling open their doors to robbers and murderers, and cut-throats and assassins feel their salutary influence, and find, within their walls, safety from force or justice. In this manner, and in this sense, do you invite and receive sinners into the bosom of Christ's church ; and such a charm is there in that sacred ground, that no man can attack them in their asylum without being destroyed by your thunder.

But then, to set against this, we have some advantages of a like nature, which you are not aware of.

I have known the time, when the figure of a material church, cut out in pasteboard, placed upon a long stick so artfully that it might seem to totter and represent the danger our poor church is in, and carried with an awful air before a reverend dignitary at an election for parliament men, hath been thought a sovereign remedy against its enemies, and of force enough to drive them headlong and spiritless out of the field. Nay, I have known the very word *church*, or *high church*, pronounced with a loud emphasis and a proper accent, and repeated a due number of times; I have known it change the countenances and voices of a numberless crowd into something fierce and horrid more than what is human, blow up their hearts and swell all their veins into a sort of phrenzy, (which they called zeal because it felt hot,) and have the very same operation exactly upon them, and push them upon the very same exploits, as if they had taken an excessive quantity of wine or opium. At the same time I have known the same word, pronounced movingly and tenderly with the eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, turn falsehoods into truths, a sinner into a saint, and a disturber of the common peace into a tutelar deity.

These are privileges, which I think it worth your while to be acquainted with. But there is one more advantage I will not omit, because we seem to depend very much upon it, and have already received much good from it, and you, as I am informed by

travellers, have nothing like it. And that is, 'that we never fail to remember our church in all our cups, to drink her health, and to allow her prosperity a liberal share in all our merriments.' Thus we sanctify our wine with our zeal for the church; and the wine returns the civility by keeping alive and increasing the warmth of our zeal.

This, many persons esteem to be a truer characteristic of a good churchman, than even the doctrine of passive obedience itself; because it is known, that many other churches have espoused that doctrine; but no other church in the world ever pretended to this practice but ours. No wonder, if your Holiness hears sometimes of disadvantages or disappointments in the affairs of your church, when this custom hath been so much neglected or discouraged amongst your people. And, if the word *church*, alone, hath been found to perform wonders; what may we not expect from it, when it is made a toast, and hath all the strength and warmth of generous wine added to it?

It is very entertaining to observe how the authority of the church, the articles of the church, the liturgy of the church, the homilies of the church, shall all be urged, by many of our loudest churchmen, and pleaded against others, whilst their force shall be disallowed and totally neglected in points disagreeable to themselves.

The authority of the church is the voice of God himself ; but it is nothing to them, if they happen to have bishops whom they dislike or suspect.

The articles of the church are irresistible arguments against others ; but they beg leave to except two or three unnecessary ones, which border too much upon Calvin, or press too hard upon your church.

The public service is, beyond all example, irreprehensible ; but then care must be taken to interpret the plainest passages in it by the most obscure, and particularly that the expressions of Scripture and ancient creeds be faithfully understood in the sense of modern schoolmen.

And as for the homilies, they are good or bad, of undeniable authority, or of none, just as they themselves please. Those against rebellion are particularly good against all tumults and disorders and treasons but their own ; and are to be urged home against the men whom they dislike. But those against your idolatry and antichristianism, and against many of your doctrines, I assure your Holiness, are of no account amongst the same men, but as the warm, overhasty efforts of ignorant zeal in the first reformers ; not fit to be urged against any true churchman, (any more than those of the Calvinistical strain,) since the time of archbishop Laud.

And all this passes smoothly with such as are under their direction ; though it be so plain, one

would think, to the most ordinary capacity, that all such matters are fixed with equal infallibility; that authority is the same when it is against them, as when it is for them; and that either all points of human decision are settled so as to admit of no dispute, or that none are. There is no medium. And, unless this be allowed, without any empty distinctions where there is no difference, I believe, in time, no man of sense will be able to see any difference between your popery and that of many amongst us, but that ours is protestant popery and yours is popish popery.

Learning hath been deservedly looked upon, in polite countries, as the great support and ornament of human life and true religion. But the state, in which it is now amongst us, is hardly to be described. It seems as if not only learning, but even curiosity itself and all pretence to it, were vanishing from amongst us. Our education is, of late, framed to heat our young men into faction, rather than to animate them into learning; and boys, as soon as they are taught any thing, are seen to be entered into violence, and prepared for all the impressions of a party.

Our universities have been deservedly styled fountains of literature. But I wish I could say, there were not those in them, who industriously poison those fountains, or who employ all their capacity and credit to make it become a more

laudable character to be a furious zealot, than a good governor or a hard student ; and more reputable learning, to be thoroughly versed in the half-sheets and pamphlets of party scandal, than in all the good sense of the best authors of antiquity. And I wish I had not occasion to add, that from hence it comes to pass, in them, that sound learning and good manners, and industry in promoting these, are often seen to expose a man to a series of discouragements, opposition, and ill treatment ; whilst party zeal shall recommend persons, of whose tempers or capacities or morals I shall say nothing, to all the regard and honour that can be showed them.

Your Holiness need not, indeed, much fear any prodigious advances farther, on our part, towards learning or truth ; which, unless we have it already in our possession, may lie eternally at the bottom of the well, for all that we are likely to do to draw it up ; no buckets being allowed to be let down for it, but what are stamped, and no ropes to be used to let them down, but what are of just such a measure and strength. For by this means, how can it be, but that the capacities and application of the greatest souls must be exceedingly cramped and stinted, when the whole method of procedure is so exquisitely fitted, not to enlarge the views and enquiries of men, but to determine the mind to one certain set of thoughts already fixed to the truth ; and the tongue to one

certain set of sounds for their eternal defence and security ?

The public exercises are not indeed exactly what they were, when the bare word of Aristotle, or Aquinas, passed for truth as currently as a bank-note passes for money. But the method they are in, is still the same in quality, though not in quantity ; for, though we have discarded many particulars, yet we retain, in the whole, much the same forms and modes which you left with us at parting, for the better securing of what we have not discarded.

We dispute still, in a constant round, as you, our predecessors, used to do, *de omni ente, scibili, and non scibili*. We have still the same *quoad hoc* and *non quoad hoc* ; the same *quatenus* and *non quatenus*, which we inherited ; and many other auxiliary words, of great importance to refresh the disputants, and to keep a dispute going ; but of none at all, towards the discovering or recommending any one single truth to the world.

This method may be called the art of wrangling as long as the moderator of the dispute is at leisure ; and may well enough be supposed to be a game at learned racket. The question is the ball of contention ; and he wins, who shows himself able to keep up the ball longest. A syllogism strikes it to the respondent ; and a negation, or a lucky distinction, returns it back to the opponent ; and so it flies over the heads of those, who have time to sit under it.

till the judge of the game strikes it down with authority into rest and silence.

This is the state of things with us; and that chiefly in cases, in which all generations and all men are equally concerned. What is truth, is determined for us, and settled before we are born by forefathers and superiors, in the ages of illuminated understandings and unprejudiced judgments. And our learned education doth not so much as pretend to be designed for further discoveries of truth in the most important matters; but is all framed to teach us the art of defending that which is already found out, and decreed to be truth, before our time; and the great duty of being thoroughly humbled into contentment with what is already provided for us; and into an abhorrence of all vain thoughts of improving the intellectual estate left us by our careful ancestors. The voice of authority is this, 'hitherto shalt thou come and no further.'

After this manner is every thing, in our schools of literature and theology, established within unmoveable limits. We have established questions, out of the number of which it is not allowed to wander. And this creates a round of established syllogisms to carry on the attack, and established distinctions for the defence. From hence it comes to pass, that even the youngest disputants are often heard, in their first public exercises, to debate about God's prescience, and future contingencies, in one fixed method of

difficulties and solutions; and with full as much learning and as clear light, as is to be found amongst the labours of the weightiest of the scholastic writers themselves.

But the good effect is much more visible, and much more remarkable, in the theological schools, where the method is equally in one uniform, unvaried course; and where, by that means, it is not quite so uncommon a thing, as some persons wish it were, to hear St Athanasius' or St Austin's word go farther than an Apostle's; and an idle distinction, or incomprehensible definition, of one of your schoolmen, decide a difficulty, much more to satisfaction, than a plain, intelligible expression or affirmation of our Saviour's.

If it were in any degree better, either in the established universities of North Britain, or in our dissenting academies in the south, I would freely own it. But take my word for it, it is, of the two, rather worse. In the north, there being a temporal kingdom of Christ, as well as a spiritual one, settled by law, ordination and preferments are by consequence rigidly and inseparably tied to one certain scheme of opinions; and this naturally determines the public education, and makes the rising generation conscientiously avoid the least tendency to any design of being wiser than their forefathers.

And in the south, amongst our non-conformists, it is much the same. The same logics and the same

bodies of theology, as they are called, descend from generation to generation. The same systems and syllogisms, definitions and distinctions, pass on current for divinity ; and Calvin and the Gospel go hand in hand, as if there were not a hair's breadth to choose between them.

There may be exceptions ; but this is generally the case ; and the more unlikely soon to be otherwise, with them, upon two accounts ; first, because their toleration is founded upon their mighty boasts of adhering more strictly to the doctrinal articles of the church in the sense of the first reformers, than the churchmen themselves ; the defence of which, therefore, is pretty much left to them, to pride themselves in ; and, secondly, because their very catechisms are systems of all the deep points, and common places, and hard words, in divinity ; by which means, their people being all systematical divines, keep them strictly to the received scheme ; and raise very great clamours, and very little contributions, upon the least deviation from what they have hitherto valued themselves upon understanding better than their neighbours, and have been taught, from children, to embrace as the very essence and life of the Gospel.

To this method of literature it is, that we owe (what is of the greatest service to your cause) such a multitude of writers, on all sides ; who, when they come abroad into the world, defend the sub-

limest points, by the bare repetition of words ; to which, when they are pressed, they are not ashamed to own, that they have no such meaning, as they fix to them, upon any other single occasion, in the whole compass of speaking ; that is, none at all.

And to this it is, that we owe, at length, the blessed discovery, and candid profession, that it is not fit that we should have any meaning to our words, when we speak about God, the Supreme Being, whom we are to worship in spirit and truth ; a profession, which, if it doth not turn to your Holiness' account, it is not their fault, who own it, amongst protestants.

The three great impediments to any advances towards a reformation, in your church, have been always found to be these ; a false learning ; a real ignorance ; and a system of preferments, fixed and tied down to a particular system of opinions or words.

The two first often go together. There is often, in the uneducated, a real ignorance, without a false learning ; whereas, in the others, there cannot be a false learning, without a real ignorance. But both put together would have little effect against the nature of things, and the irresistible force of truth, without the last of the three. Were it not for that, you would quickly find that the mask would drop from the face of things ; and the clouds, which false learning had wrapt about the most important points,

would be dissipated, and leave truth, in its lovely simplicity, naked and open to every honest eye.

But your security, you find, lies in the last. Whilst the church and the world are so closely and vitally united, and the immense riches of your archbishoprics, bishoprics, deaneries, canonries, abbies, monasteries, cardinalships, and popedom, are all confined to the worship of the mass book, and to the creed and decrees of the council of Trent; the sons of your church find little occasion for any such learning, as may tend to poverty; but a great deal of comfort in another sort of it, which carries as big a sound amongst the vulgar, and turns to a much better account, as it brings along with it defence and riches, both; and serves to support those opinions, which support that church, which is endowed with those riches.

I do not mention this with a view to your affairs only; but to remind you, that you have so much of this yourselves, and find so prodigious a benefit in it, that you have the less occasion to wonder at, or envy, the something like it, amongst us protestants.

Your Holiness needs not, I think, call in the assistance of your infallibility, to judge, from all this put together, in what a condition we really are; whilst, all the while, we are boasting of our glorious separation from you; and deafening the by-standers, and tiring ourselves, in our several ways, with loud cries about our own apostolical purity and perfection.

As far, indeed, as we are, in practice, separated from you, in what we ourselves condemn in your church ; so far we may, consistently enough, boast. But, as far as we are united to you in our practice, though irreconcilably separated in words ; methinks, to confess the truth, you have rather a handle of boasting against us, that we ourselves think fit to practise, in some instances and some degrees, what we profess so severely to cry out against in your church.

I forget that your Holiness hath the affairs of the world upon you. But I cannot persuade myself to make any apology, when I consider it is your interest that I should go on in this odd, unusual way of speaking truth.

I have freely laid before you, what may reasonably enough give you and your cardinals a sensible pleasure. I have, without reserve, showed you many of the follies, weaknesses, unhappinesses, inconsistencies, and wickednesses, of us protestants. It is but just to ourselves now, that I should change the scene a little, and take down your satisfaction, a few degrees, from that height, to which it may, by this time, be raised. I scorn to flatter you, any more than ourselves ; and how should you know the true measures, either of your hopes, or of your fears, about Great Britain, if you be not truly informed of our advantages and happinesses, as well as of the contrary. Nor is it any thing more than what is

reasonable, that I, who have, in the former part of this address, made no scruple to give myself pain, in order to give your Holiness pleasure, should now be permitted to give you pain, in order to give myself pleasure ; especially since I promise, that, if any thing offers, which it may be a satisfaction to you to know, I will without reserve intermix it, to mitigate the affliction.*

The old primate still breathes ; and breathes the same spirit of christian liberty, which he ever did ; and the same hatred of all spiritual usurpation and tyranny that bears any resemblance to yours. May he long breathe. And may his last days be made serene and easy, by the returns of all that regard and deference, which his former labours and constancy have merited.†

He sees himself surrounded by a bench of brethren, who have stood the shock of the day of trial, and brought off immortal glory. I forbear, out of tenderness, to tell you, what excellencies they are

* [A few paragraphs are omitted here, which relate to king George, and to the local politics of Great Britain at that time. However applicable and pointed they may have been when written, they have little to interest readers in this country at the present day. EDITOR.]

† The Most Reverend Dr Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, called by all friends of liberty, *Old Rock*, from the steadiness of his conduct in this time of trial, in spite of all the arts of tories, agreeably with his motto, *Rupe Immobilior*.

possessed of; or what a confidence all true Britons place in them.

One, indeed, is removed from us; and one, to whose services this nation owes an eternal monument. I have a passion for his great name; but no words of mine ought to be joined to it.

I would pay some tribute to a memory, dear to liberty and religion, if any thing I could say could add to a reputation and character, acquired, supported, and enlarged, by pastoral labours uninterrupted from his earliest youth to his latest old age; and by writings, which will give life to the name of BURNET, long after the names of his enemies shall cease to be remembered.

Your church hath ever paid him the respect of fear; and the world will, in ages to come, pay to his memory that love and admiration, which the ungrateful of the present age denied to himself.

Were there no other reason to think so, I should be certain, that this news will give you, and your friends abroad, some joy; because it hath given it to that party of Protestants, as they call themselves, amongst us, who always partake in your Holiness' pleasures.

I will hasten from this unpleasant subject; and take leave of your Holiness, with a proposal, as odd and romantic, in appearance, as this whole address may seem; but, in reality, neither odd nor romantic, any otherwise, than as all justice, and simplicity,

and plain dealing, are esteemed to be so, in a degenerate and corrupted age.

But, if it be so, that I am, in this, transported beyond due bounds, let all the fault be imputed to the subject I have been upon.

The state of religion, on all sides, is a scene of astonishment; and the surprise of things, to which I have been heretofore a stranger, hath, I confess, filled me with an enthusiasm, too warm to be contained.

Descend, Holy Father, from your seven hills, and disdain not to tread upon the level plain. Unrobe yourself of all the gaudy attire of a pompous superstition. Lay aside all the embarrassments of worldly grandeur. Turn your eyes from the coffers of gold and silver, of which your great predecessor, St Peter, and his greater master, had none. Acknowledge religion to be something more, than being wrapt up in a heap of fine vestments, or being skilled in a dexterous performance of antic gestures.

And then look inwards. Divest yourself of your infallibility; and own yourself to be like one of us. As to renounce a kingdom for your church, hath been accounted the height of honour and saintship; so now, it will be your glory, in the most exalted degree, to renounce, in the name of your church, a double kingdom, for Christ; that temporal kingdom, which, in his name, and to his reproach, you have erected over the bodies and estates; and that spir-

itual one, which you have established over the consciences of mankind.

Remember, in the midst of all your luxury, and delicacy, and ostentation, what ground you stand upon. The bowels of the earth are armed against you. The shocks of earthquakes and the eruptions of volcanos, besides the common calamities of nations, are the beginnings of that day of vengeance, which will come, unless you prevent it by a speedy conversion to christianity.

Renounce, therefore, your golden keys, and your fruitful kingdoms. Throw away your fopperies, and your indulgencies, and your processions, and your canonizations. Show yourself in the nakedness of simplicity; and take the Gospel into your hand, and into your heart. Call in your emissaries, and your missionaries, from all parts of the world; and let them receive instruction, themselves, before they pretend to convert others.

Trouble the world no more with quarrels about the holy sepulchre; but believe that he is risen, who once was laid in it. Let the wood of his cross cease to be magnified to an immense bulk; and his natural body cease to be multiplied to an infinite number. Restore the heads of holy men and women to their bodies, if they can be found. Let the bones of the dead saints be at rest, and their blood be released from the perpetual fatigue of working wonders.

Throw up all your legends ; discard all your miracles, stated and unstated ; and make over all your tricks to the jugglers of this world. Declare to the Jesuits, that their game is at an end ; and restore the inquisition to hell, in which it was forged.

And, for the conclusion of this great work, celebrate an open and solemn marriage between faith and reason ; proclaim an eternal friendship between piety and charity ; and establish an agreement, never to be dissolved, between religion, on one side, and humanity, forbearance, and good nature, on the other.

I would not have you think, that I propose all this to your Holiness, and nothing from our own quarter. So far from it, that I am free to acknowledge, that it cannot be expected, that you should thus far recede from your present pretensions, unless others are ready to give up every thing of the same sort and the same nature.

If your Holiness parts with infallibility, it is but equitable, that the protestant churches should part with indisputable authority. If you give up the decrees of the council of Trent ; let them, in Holland, give up the synod of Dort ; and others, every where, throw off all manner of human decisions, in religion. If you discard the inquisition, let them discard classes, and judicatories, and consistories, and fines, and imprisonments, and the whole train of secular artillery, and the whole armory of the weapons of this world.

If you make all your great names bow and pay homage to Christ, let them bring forth their army on the other side ; and let Calvin, and Luther, and Zuinglius, and Knox, and Laud, and Baxter, and all other idols, bow down to the same Christ. Let Christians cease to be called by their names ; and let them, who have one master, have but one common denomination.

And let the whole be sealed with the kiss of charity, and with all the tokens of benevolence and love.

But whether you, or they, will hear, or will forbear ; whether any thing of this sort shall be done, or not done ; I have delivered my own soul.

I had an impulse upon me, to say all this. I have followed that impulse ; and, what I have said, I have said.

I have opened my heart to your Holiness ; and you may make what use you please of it.

If you think fit to accept of my correspondence, I faithfully promise to give you, from time to time, an exact account of the state, in which we protestants are, or are like to be.

For the present, without any farther ceremony or apology, I kiss your Holiness' feet, not in a religious, but a civil manner ; and am,

Your most faithful friend,

or generous adversary,

RICHARD STEELE.

SERMON

ON THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM, OR CHURCH,
OF CHRIST.

ST JOHN xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

ONE of those great effects, which length of time is seen to bring along with it, is the alteration of the meaning annexed to certain sounds. The signification of a word, well known and understood by those who first made use of it, is very insensibly varied, by passing through many mouths, and by being taken and given by multitudes, in common discourse; till it often comes to stand for a complication of notions, as distant from the original intention of it, nay, as contradictory to it, as darkness is to light. The ignorance and weakness of some, and the passions and bad designs of others, are the great instruments of this evil; which, even when it seems to affect only indifferent matters, ought in reason to be opposed, as it tends, in its nature, to confound men's notions

in weightier points ; but, when it hath once invaded the most sacred and important subjects, ought, in duty, to be resisted with a more open and undisguised zeal, as what toucheth the very vitals of all that is good, and is just going to take from men's eyes the boundaries of right and wrong.

The only cure for this evil, in cases of so great concern, is to have recourse to the originals of things, to the law of reason, in those points which can be traced back thither ; and to the declarations of Jesus Christ and his immediate followers, in such matters as took their rise solely from those declarations. For the case is plainly this, that words and sounds have had such an effect, not upon the nature of things, which is unmoveable, but upon the minds of men in thinking of them ; that the very same word remaining, which at first truly represented one certain thing, by having multitudes of new inconsistent ideas, in every age, and every year, added to it, becomes itself the greatest hindrance to the true understanding of the nature of the thing first intended by it.

For instance, *religion*, in St James' days, was virtue and integrity as to ourselves, and charity and beneficence to others ; before God, even the father.* By degrees, it is come to signify, in most of the countries throughout the whole world, the performance of every thing almost, except virtue and

* James i. 27.

charity ; and particularly, a punctual exactness in a regard to particular times, places, forms, and modes, diversified according to the various humours of men ; recommended and practised under the avowed name of *external religion* ; two words, which, in the sense fixed upon them by many christians, God hath put asunder ; and which, therefore, no man should join together. And, accordingly, the notion of a *religious* man differs in every country, just as much as times, places, ceremonies, imaginary austerities, and all other outward circumstances, are different and various ; whereas in truth, though a man, truly religious in other respects, may make use of such things, yet they cannot be the least part of his religion, properly so called, any more than his food, or his raiment, or any other circumstance of his life.

Thus, likewise, the *worship* of God, to be paid by christians, was, in our Saviour's time, and in his own plain words, the worship of the Father *in spirit and truth* ; and this declared to be one great end proposed in the christian dispensation. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him."* But the notion of it is become quite another thing ; and, in many christian countries, that, which still retains the name of the worship of God, is indeed the neglect and the diminution of the Father, and the worship

* John iv. 23.

of other beings besides, and more than the Father. And this, performed in such a manner, as that any indifferent spectator would conclude, that neither the consciences nor understandings of men, neither spirit nor truth, were at all concerned in the matter ; or rather, that they had been banished from it by an express command. In the mean time the word, or sound, still remains the same in discourse. The whole lump of indigested and inconsistent notions and practices ; every thing that is solemnly said or done, when the worship of God is professed, is equally covered under that general name ; and, by the help of using the same original word, passeth easily for the thing itself.

Again ; *prayer*, in all our Lord's directions about it, and particularly in that form, which he himself taught his followers, was a calm, undisturbed address to God, under the notion of a Father, expressing those sentiments and wishes before him, which every sincere mind ought to have. But the same word, by the help of men and voluminous rules of art, is come to signify heat and flame, in such a manner and to such a degree, that a man may be in the best disposition in the world, and yet not be devout enough to pray ; and many an honest person hath been perplexed, by this means, with doubts and fears of being incapable of praying, for want of an intenseness of heat ; which hath no more relation to the duty, than

a man's being in a fever hath, to the sincerity of his professions or addresses to any earthly prince.

Once more ; the *love* of God, and of our Saviour, was at first, in his own words and those of St John, many times repeated, the "keeping his commandments, or doing his will."* But the notion of it was, it seems, left very jejune ; and so hath been improved by his later followers, till the same name, still kept up in the language of christians, is far removed from the thing principally and first intended ; and is come by degrees to signify a violent passion, commotion, and extacy, venting itself in such sort of expressions and disorders, as other passions do ; and this regulated and defined by such a variety of imaginations, that an ordinary christian, with the utmost sincerity in his heart, is filled with nothing but eternal suspicions, doubts, and perplexities, whether he hath any thing of the true love of God, or not.

I have mentioned these particulars, not only to show the evil itself, and to how great a degree the nature of things hath suffered, in the opinions of men, by the alteration of the sense of the same words and sounds ; but to give you occasion to observe, that there can be no cure for it, in christians, but to go back to the New Testament itself ; because there alone we shall find the original intention of such words ; or the nature of the things, designed to be

* John xiv. 15, 21, 23. xv. 10. 1 John ii. 5. v. 3. 2 John 6.

signified by them, declared and fixed by our Lord, or his Apostles from him, by some such marks, as may, if we will attend to them, guide and guard us in our notions of those matters, in which we are most of all concerned.

It is with this view, that I have chosen those words, in which our Lord himself declared the nature of his own kingdom. This *kingdom* of Christ is the same with the *church* of Christ. And the notion of the church of Christ, which, at first, was only the number, small or great, of those who believed him to be the Messiah, or of those who subjected themselves to him, as their king, in the affair of religion; having since that time been so diversified by the various alterations it hath undergone, that it is almost impossible so much as to number up the many inconsistent images that have come, by daily additions, to be united together in it; nothing, I think, can be more useful, than to consider the same thing under some other image, which hath not been so much used, nor, consequently, so much defaced. And, since the image of his *kingdom* is that, under which our Lord himself chose to represent it; we may be sure that, if we sincerely examine our notion of his *church*, by what he saith of his kingdom, that it is *not of this world*, we shall exclude out of it, every thing that he would have excluded; and then, what remains will be true, pure, and uncorrupted. And

what I have to say, in order to this, will be comprehended under two general heads.

I. As the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ, he himself is king ; and in this it is implied, that he is himself the sole lawgiver to his subjects, and himself the sole judge of their behaviour, in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation. And in this sense, therefore, his kingdom is not of this world ; that he hath, in those points, left behind him no visible, human authority ; no vicegerents, who can be said properly to supply his place ; no interpreters, upon whom his subjects are absolutely to depend ; no judges over the consciences or religion of his people. For, if this were so, that any such absolute vicegerent authority, either for the making new laws, or interpreting old ones, or judging his subjects, in religious matters, were lodged in any men upon earth ; the consequence would be, that what still retains the name of the church of Christ, would not be the kingdom of Christ, but the kingdom of those men, vested with such authority. For, whoever hath such an authority of making laws, is so far a king ; and whoever can add new laws to those of Christ, equally obligatory, is as truly a king, as Christ himself is ; nay, whoever hath an absolute authority to interpret any written, or spoken laws, it is he, who is truly the lawgiver, to all intents and purposes ; and not the person who first wrote, or spake them.

In human society, the interpretation of laws may, of necessity, be lodged, in some cases, in the hands of those who were not originally the legislators. But this is not absolute, nor of bad consequence to society ; because the legislators can resume the interpretation into their own hand ; as they are witnesses to what passes in the world, and as they can, and will, sensibly interpose in all those cases, in which their interposition becomes necessary. And, therefore, they are still properly the legislators. But it is otherwise in religion, or the kingdom of Christ. He himself never interposeth, since his first promulgation of his law, either to convey infallibility to such as pretend to handle it over again ; or to assert the true interpretation of it, amidst the various and contradictory opinions of men about it. If he did certainly thus interpose, he himself would still be the legislator. But, as he doth not, if such an absolute authority be once lodged with men, under the notion of interpreters, they then become the legislators, and not Christ ; and they rule in their own kingdom, and not in his.

It is the same thing, as to rewards and punishments, to carry forward the great end of his kingdom. If any men upon earth have a right to add to the sanctions of his laws ; that is, to increase the number, or alter the nature, of the rewards and punishments of his subjects, in matters of conscience or salvation ; they are so far kings in his stead ; and

reign in their own kingdom, and not in his. So it is, whenever they erect tribunals, and exercise a judgment over the consciences of men; and assume to themselves the determination of such points, as cannot be determined, but by one who knows the hearts; or when they make any of their own declarations or decisions, to concern and affect the state of Christ's subjects, with regard to the favour of God; this is so far, the taking Christ's kingdom out of his hands, and placing it in their own.

Nor is this matter at all made better by their declaring themselves to be vicegerents, or lawmakers, or judges, under Christ, in order to carry on the ends of his kingdom. For it comes to this at last, since it doth not seem fit to Christ himself to interpose so as to prevent or remedy all their mistakes and contradictions; that, if they have this power of interpreting, or adding laws, and judging men, in such a sense, that christians shall be indispensably and absolutely obliged to obey those laws, and to submit to those decisions; I say, if they have this power lodged with them, then the kingdom, in which they rule, is not the kingdom of Christ, but of themselves; he doth not rule in it, but they; and whether they happen to agree with him, or to differ from him, as long as they are the lawgivers and judges, without any interposition from Christ, either to guide or correct their decisions, they are kings of his kingdom, and not Christ Jesus.

If, therefore, the church of Christ be the kingdom of Christ, it is essential to it, that Christ himself be the sole lawgiver, and sole judge of his subjects, in all points relating to the favour or displeasure of Almighty God ; and that all his subjects, in what station soever they may be, are equally subjects to him ; and that no one of them, any more than another, hath authority, either to make new laws for Christ's subjects ; or to impose a sense upon the old ones, which is the same thing ; or to judge, censure, or punish, the servants of another master, in matters relating purely to conscience, or salvation. If any person hath any other notion, either through a long use of words with inconsistent meanings, or through a negligence of thought ; let him but ask himself whether the church of Christ be the kingdom of Christ, or not ? And, if it be, whether this notion of it doth not absolutely exclude all other legislators and judges, in matters relating to conscience, or the favour of God ; or whether it can be his kingdom, if any mortal men have such a power of legislation and judgment in it. This inquiry will bring us back to the first, which is the only true account of the church of Christ, or the kingdom of Christ, in the mouth of a christian ; that it is the number of men, whether small or great, whether dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are subjects to Jesus Christ alone as their lawgiver and

judge, in matters relating to the favour of God, and their eternal salvation.

II. The next principal point is, that, if the church be the kingdom of Christ, and this kingdom be not of this world; this must appear from the nature and end of the laws of Christ, and of those rewards and punishments, which are the sanctions of his laws. Now his laws are declarations, relating to the favour of God in another state after this. They are declarations of those conditions to be performed, in this world, on our part, without which God will not make us happy in that to come. And they are almost all general appeals to the will of that God; to his nature, known by the common reason of mankind; and to the imitation of that nature, which must be our perfection. The keeping his commandments is declared the way to life; and the doing his will, the entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The being subjects to Christ, is to this very end, that we may the better and more effectually perform the will of God. The laws of this kingdom, therefore, as Christ left them, have nothing of this world in their view; no tendency, either to the exaltation of some, in worldly pomp and dignity; or to their absolute dominion over the faith and religious conduct of others of his subjects; or to the erecting of any sort of temporal kingdom, under the covert and name of a spiritual one.

The sanctions of Christ's law are rewards and punishments. But of what sort? Not the rewards of this world; not the offices, or glories of this state; not the pains of prisons, banishments, fines, or any lesser and more moderate penalties; nay, not the much lesser negative discouragements that belong to human society. He was far from thinking that these could be the instruments of such a persuasion, as he thought acceptable to God. But, as the great end of his kingdom was to guide men to happiness after the short images of it were over here below; so he took his motives from that place, where his kingdom first began, and where it was at last to end; from those rewards and punishments in a future state, which had no relation to this world; and, to show that his kingdom was not of this world, all the sanctions, which he thought fit to give to his laws, were not of this world at all.

St Paul understood this so well, that he gives an account of his own conduct, and that of others in the same station, in these words, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" whereas, in too many christian countries, since his days, if some, who profess to succeed him, were to give an account of their own conduct, it must be in a quite contrary strain; "Knowing the terrors of this world, and having them in our power, we do, not persuade men, but force their outward profession against their inward persuasion."

Now, wherever this is practised, whether in a great degree, or a small; in that place there is so far a change, from a kingdom which is not of this world, to a kingdom which is of this world. As soon as ever you hear of any of the engines of this world, whether of the greater or the lesser sort, you must immediately think that then, and so far, the kingdom of this world takes place. For, if the very essence of God's worship be spirit and truth; if religion be virtue and charity, under the belief of a Supreme Governour and Judge; if true real faith cannot be the effect of force; and if there can be no reward where there is no willing choice; then, in all, or any of these cases, to apply force or flattery, worldly pleasure or pain, is to act contrary to the interests of true religion, as it is plainly opposite to the maxims upon which Christ founded his kingdom; who chose the motives which are not of this world, to support a kingdom which is not of this world. And, indeed, it is too visible to be hid, that, wherever the rewards and punishments are changed from future to present, from the world to come, to the world now in possession; there, the kingdom founded by our Saviour is, in the nature of it, so far changed, that it is become, in such a degree, what he professed, *his kingdom was not; that is, of this world*; of the same sort with other common earthly kingdoms, in which the rewards are worldly honours, posts, offices, pomp, attendance, dominion;

and the punishments are prisons, fines, banishments, gallies, and racks, or something less, of the same sort.

If these can be the true supports of a kingdom which is not of this world ; then sincerity and hypocrisy, religion and no religion, force and persuasion, a willing choice and a terrified heart, are become the same things ; truth and falsehood stand in need of the same methods to propagate and support them ; and our Saviour himself was little acquainted with the right way of increasing the number of such subjects, as he wished for. If he had but at first enlightened the powers of this world, as he did St Paul ; and employed the sword which they bore, and the favours they had in their hands, to bring subjects into his kingdom ; this had been an expeditious and an effectual way, according to the conduct of some of his professed followers, to have had a glorious and extensive kingdom, or church. But this was not his design ; unless it could be compassed in quite a different way.

And, therefore, when you see our Lord, in his methods, so far removed from those of many of his disciples ; when you read nothing, in his doctrine about his own kingdom, of taking in the concerns of this world, and mixing them with those of eternity ; no commands, that the frowns and discouragements of this present state should in any case attend upon conscience and religion ; no rules against the

enquiry of all his subjects into his original message from heaven ; no orders for the kind and charitable force of penalties or capital punishments, to make men think and choose aright ; no calling upon the secular arm, whenever the magistrate should become christian, to enforce his doctrines, or to back his spiritual authority ; but, on the contrary, as plain a declaration as a few words can make, that his kingdom is not of this world ; I say, when you see this, from the whole tenor of the Gospel, so vastly opposite to many who take his name into their mouths, the questions with you ought to be, whether he did not know the nature of his own kingdom, or church, better than any since his time ; whether you can suppose, he left any such matters to be decided against himself and his own express professions ; and, whether, if an angel from heaven should give you any account of his kingdom, contrary to what he himself hath done, it can be of any weight or authority with Christians.

I have now made some such observations, drawn from the church being the kingdom of Christ, and not of any men in that kingdom ; from the nature of his laws, and from those rewards and punishments, which are the sanctions of those laws ; as lead us naturally into the true notion of the church, or kingdom, of Christ, by excluding out of it every thing inconsistent with his being king, lawgiver, and judge ; as well as with the nature of his laws, and of his

promises and threatenings. I will only make two or three observations, grounded upon this ; and so conclude.

And, *First*. From what hath been said it is very plain in general, that the grossest mistakes in judgment, about the nature of Christ's kingdom, or church, have arisen from hence, that men have argued from other visible societies, and other visible kingdoms of this world, to what ought to be visible and sensible in his kingdom ; constantly leaving out of their notion the most essential part of it, that Christ is king in his own kingdom ; forgetting this king himself, because he is not now seen by mortal eyes ; and substituting others in his place, as lawgivers and judges, in the same points, in which he must either alone, or not at all, be lawgiver and judge ; not contented with such a kingdom as he established, and desires to reign in ; but urging and contending that his kingdom must be like other kingdoms. Whereas he hath positively warned them against any such arguings, by assuring them that this kingdom is his kingdom, and that it is not of this world ; and therefore that no one of his subjects is lawgiver and judge over others of them, in matters relating to salvation, but he alone ; and that we must not frame our ideas, from the kingdoms of this world, of what ought to be, in a visible and sensible manner, in his kingdom.

Secondly. From what hath been said it appears, that the kingdom of Christ, which is the church of

Christ, is the number of persons who are sincerely and willingly subjects to him, as lawgiver and judge, in all matters truly relating to conscience or eternal salvation. And, the more close and immediate this regard to him is, the more certainly and the more evidently true it is, that they are of his kingdom. This may appear fully to their own satisfaction, if they have recourse to him himself, in the gospel; if they think it a sufficient authority, that he hath declared the conditions of their salvation, and that no man upon earth hath any authority to declare any other, or to add one tittle to them; if they resolve to perform what they see he layeth a stress upon; and if they trust no mortal with the absolute direction of their consciences, the pardon of their sins, or the determining of their interest in God's favour; but wait for their judge, who alone can bring to light the hidden things of darkness.

If they feel themselves disposed and resolved to receive the words of eternal life from himself; to take their faith from what he himself once delivered, who knew better than all the rest of the world what he required of his own subjects; to direct their worship by his rule, and their whole practice by the general law which he laid down; if they feel themselves in this disposition, they may be very certain, that they are truly his subjects, and members of his kingdom. Nor need they envy the happiness of others, who may think it a much more evident mark

of their belonging to the kingdom of Christ, that they have other lawgivers and judges, in Christ's religion, besides Jesus Christ; that they have recourse not to his own words, but the words of others who profess to interpret them; that they are ready to submit to this interpretation, let it be what it will; that they have set up to themselves the idol of an unintelligible authority, both in belief, and worship, and practice; in words, under Jesus Christ, but in deed and in truth over him; as it removes the minds of his subjects from himself to weak and passionate men; and as it claims the same rule and power in his kingdom, which he himself alone can have.

But, *Thirdly*. This will be another observation, that it evidently destroys the rule and authority of Jesus Christ, as king, to set up any other authority in his kingdom, to which his subjects are indispensably and absolutely obliged to submit their consciences, or their conduct, in what is properly called religion. There are some professed christians, who contend openly for such an authority, as indispensably obliges all around them to unity of profession; that is, to profess even what they do not, what they cannot, believe to be true. This sounds so grossly, that others, who think they act a glorious part in opposing such an enormity, are very willing, for their own sakes, to retain such an authority as shall oblige men, whatever they themselves think, though not to profess what they do not believe, yet to for-

bear the profession and publication of what they do believe, let them believe it of never so great importance.

Both these pretensions are founded upon the mistaken notion of the peace, as well as authority of the kingdom, that is, the church, of Christ. Which of them is the most insupportable to an honest and a christian mind, I am not able to say; because they both equally found the authority of the church of Christ upon the ruins of sincerity and common honesty, and mistake stupidity and sleep for peace; because they would both equally have prevented all reformation where it hath been, and will forever prevent it where it is not already; and, in a word, because both equally divest Jesus Christ of his empire in his own kingdom; set the obedience of his subjects loose from himself; and teach them to prostitute their consciences at the feet of others, who have no right in such a manner to trample upon them.

The peace of Christ's kingdom is a manly and reasonable peace; built upon charity, and love, and mutual forbearance, and receiving one another as God receives us. As for any other peace, founded upon a submission of our honesty as well as our understandings, it is falsely so called. It is not the peace of the kingdom of Christ, but the lethargy of it; and a sleep unto death, when his subjects throw off their relation to him; fix their subjection to

others ; and even in cases, where they have a right to see, and where they have a power to see, his will, as it really is, shall shut their eyes, and go blindfold at the command of others ; because those others are pleased to make themselves the sole judges of the will of their great Lord and Master.

To conclude ; the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ. He is king in his own kingdom. He is sole lawgiver to his subjects, and sole judge, in matters relating to salvation. His laws and sanctions are plainly fixed ; and relate to the favour of God, and not at all to the rewards or penalties of this world. All his subjects are equally his subjects ; and, as such, equally without authority to alter, to add to, or to interpret his laws so, as to claim the absolute submission of others to such interpretation. And all are his subjects, and in his kingdom, who are ruled and governed by him. Their faith was once delivered by him. The conditions of their happiness were once laid down by him. The nature of God's worship was once declared by him. And it is easy to judge, whether of the two is most becoming a subject of the kingdom of Christ, that is, a member of his church ; to seek all these particulars in those plain and short declarations of their king and lawgiver himself ; or to hunt after them through the infinite contradictions, the numberless perplexities, the endless disputes, of weak men, in several ages, till the enquirer himself is lost in the labyrinth, and

perhaps sits down in despair or infidelity. If Christ be our king, let us show ourselves subjects to him alone, in the great affair of conscience and eternal salvation ; and, without fear of man's judgment, live and act as becomes those who wait for the appearance of an all-knowing and impartial Judge ; even that King, *whose kingdom is not of this world.*

ON

DIVISIONS AMONG CHRISTIANS.

[THE following article is composed of the three first parts of two sermons, entitled, *Two Sermons concerning the Divisions and Cruelties of which the Christian Religion has been made the Occasion.* The text is from Matthew, x. 34. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." The parts of these discourses here selected, are printed in the exact language of the author, and contain all that he said on these heads, except one short paragraph, which reflects with undue severity on the Catholic Church, and is therefore omitted.]

I. I SHALL observe the truth of what is here predicted by our Lord; that the christian religion hath been made the occasion of much disturbance, of many sad divisions, hatreds, and persecutions in the world.

It is, indeed, a very moving and uneasy consideration, that, from the time of its first appearance to this very day, such an use hath been made of it, or

of something or other supposed to belong to it, as hath tempted some to think that the mischief it hath given rise to, in the world, is not countervailed by all the good it hath ever hitherto brought forth. And there needs but a very little knowledge in the history of former times, or the transactions of these later ages, to make one wish that there were much less reason to think so, than there appears to be.

What our Saviour chiefly had an eye to, in the text, was probably that persecution, and those instances of malice, which he saw it would occasion in the world at its first appearance ; that hatred of christians it would produce in the breasts of unbelievers ; and those storms of persecution, which the profession of it would raise against them. But, as he could not likewise be ignorant of those hatreds and animosities it would, in after ages, raise amongst christians themselves, against one another, to the disturbing and ruining their common peace and quiet ; so, he did not, we may be sure, exclude these, but had an eye to them all, in the words of the text.

When christianity first appeared, and first was preached, the prejudices and passions of men ran high against it ; as it was a contradiction to their received ways of worship, to their former and settled principles, to the dictates and practices of their forefathers, and to their own indulged lusts and evil habits. And so the very profession of it, much

more the bold preaching of it, alarmed all mankind against the men who professed and preached it. They were hated by their nearest relations; they were exposed to the greatest evils in life; and they were persecuted even to death. All countries were disturbed at them; and all princes and magistrates made it their business to extirpate them. This was their case almost constantly, till their numbers increased; till christianity became the established religion of whole nations, and princes became the temporal patrons of the church. And thus did this religion, which Jesus came to plant in the world, give an alarm to the kingdoms of it; and was made the handle to unspeakable disquiet and disturbance, malice and persecution, in it.

But, when it came to be the settled religion, to have the approbation and countenance of princes, and to enjoy the favourable look of the great men of this world; what a glorious scene would any one expect, who seriously looks into the design, nature, and precepts of it? What a scene of calmness and serenity of mind, of mortification and conquest of those passions and lusts, from whence proceeds all the mischief in the world? What a scene of love and beneficence to one another; of joy and delight in one another's happiness; of openness and freedom; of sincerity and kindness; of humility, condescension, humanity, and meekness? What could any one expect who searcheth into the Gospel, more than

the humours and actions of mankind, but that peace and holiness should have kissed each other; that contentment and happiness should have flourished in the earth; that all, that could contribute to the quiet and satisfaction of the world, should from this time have abounded in it?

Would you think, that, as soon as the christians had rest from the world about them, their passions ran as high against one another, as the passions of the unbelieving world had done against them before? Would you imagine that they turned from suffering gloriously, to biting and devouring, to hating and condemning one another? That their strongest and most avowed hatreds, their most fatal divisions and animosities, took their rise from, and had their foundation in, some point of religion, some point of faith or worship? And that they were often more concerned for some insignificant matter, or some point of speculation, that the Gospel had not so absolutely determined as to leave no room for diversity of opinions; that they were too often, I say, much more zealous to defend or oppose these, than to preserve the obligation, and secure the practice of the weightier matters of the Gospel? Yet thus it was; and thus it hath been ever since, to that degree, that it is now hardly a question whether more unkindness and inhumanity, more malice and hatred, more violence and barbarity, were heretofore shown by the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles towards

christians for the sake of their religion ; than have been since shown by christians towards one another, on the score of some religious differences.

The contending with the sword of the spirit, the word of truth and meekness, for the purity of faith and worship once delivered to the saints, was truly commendable and praiseworthy. This sort of contention for the Gospel, in the spirit of the Gospel, hath ever tended to the increasing of charity, as well as to the manifesting of truth. But a false zeal quickly devoured it, and took its place ; and very soon prompted men of ill tempers and worldly designs, to make a greater distinction amongst christians, than need ; to stigmatize honest men than themselves with hard names and odious appellations ; and, then, to treat them contumeliously, and as persons unfit to be dealt with in the ways of humanity and candour. And, on the other side, this same pretence gave occasion to men of parts and passion, when they saw themselves likely to be oppressed, to strengthen themselves in their opinions ; to form parties upon a foundation distinct from that of the flourishing party ; to enter into close designs and combinations ; and so to help forward the disturbance and disquiet of the christian church.

If we pass from these first ages downwards, who can speak or hear of such things, as have been publicly transacted amongst christians, on religious accounts, without a very sensible commotion within ?

We may read it in histories, and we may see it with our eyes, that there is an immortal hatred, an uneasiness not ever likely to cease, between christians of several denominations. There are inquisitions and torments designed, and made use of, by christians against christians, beyond the example of former ages, and beyond the cruelty of either Jewish or Heathen persecutors. We have known men tortured and persecuted, murdered and massacred, banished from their possessions, deprived of their estates, expelled their native land, separated from their children and friends, or their friends and children torn by violence from them; for the sake of religion, and under pretence of doing service to the church of God, by extending and propagating the faith and worship of a particular set of men. And how exactly hath the account of this matter given by our Saviour been verified, in several countries, in these last ages, as well as the first times of the Gospel? "A man hath been at variance against his father; and the daughter against her mother; and the daughter in law against her mother in law; and a man's foes have been those of his own household."* "There have been five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in

* Matth. x. 35, 36.

law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.”*

We of this nation, indeed, read and hear, at a distance, of greater barbarities and cruelties, than we have ourselves experienced, or seen with our eyes; but yet we, amongst others, may help to prove the truth of what I am now observing. For what heats and passions, what unkindnesses and incivilities, what hatreds and variances, what parties and distinctions; nay, what projects and designs are there often seen amongst us, which, if the bottom of things be searched into, owe their original, or their prosecution, to some real or pretended difference in religious opinions, or modes of worship? Names are invented to distinguish some from others, and make them odious and suspected; and these names are commonly taken from something that bears a relation to religion and the worship of God; and the church is too often hooked into designs, in which it hath little to do; and sacred words are made to serve the purposes of projecting men. For this is laid down as certain, that, though true religion be little regarded, but rather trampled on, by the generality of the world; yet the pretences taken from thence are moving, and never fail to alarm the multitude, and to forward a design. Any doctrine, manifestly framed to serve a purpose, can at any time easily be made the distinguishing mark of a true

* Luke xii. 52, 53.

christian, or the true church ; and all, that will not yield to the truth of it, shall presently be branded with some religious nickname or other. Heretic and schismatic at the head, and multitudes of other opprobrious names ranked under them, have all been taken from some difference in the holding and professing the same religion. And they have been used so freely, and after such a manner, as that they have often effectually contributed to the destruction of christian charity, to the overthrow of peace and concord, to the ruin of many excellent designs, and to the promoting many bad ones.

It is a shame to speak of these things ; but it is too plain to be dissembled, that it hath fared thus with christianity ever since it appeared ; that it hath not only been made the occasion of the bitterest persecutions from the infidel part of the world, but also of the bitterest hatreds, and strongest malice, and most irreconcilable divisions, amongst christians themselves ; and these, at length, rooted in the hearts of men, to that depth and with that firmness, that it appears next to impossible to extirpate them, or to restore the world to the spirit of meekness, and quiet, and to the temper of reasonable creatures. *Next to impossible*, I say ; for what can we think, when all the attempts Almighty God hath seen fit to make towards it, have hitherto proved ineffectual ; when even his last dispensation by the hands of his Son, sent from heaven, hath been so far from healing

the wounds and breaches in the love and regards of men to one another, that it hath been abused to the inflaming and widening them? When God himself *speaks to them of peace*, and yet *they make themselves ready to battle*? When they have taken occasion from this last trial of his, designed to plant peace and unity in the earth, to be the more quarrelsome, and the more incensed against one another; when they search into the bowels of this very revelation, and fetch fuel out of this most peaceable institution, to set themselves, and the world about them, in flames; what small hope, I say, can we have of the restitution and re-establishment of quiet and harmony in the minds and actions of men; whilst they are ever finding something in religion itself, to exasperate their minds against one another, to make their lives unquiet, and society unharmonious?

The prophets have in vain described the golden age of their Messiah, and in vain extolled his glorious and pacific reign, unless God himself interpose. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb," saith the prophet Isaiah, "and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor

destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”*

If this be a description which relates to the reign of Christ, and to the glories of his kingdom, when it should be set up in this world ; we must with grief remark, that either the prophet speaks only with respect to the nature and tendency of Christ’s doctrine ; that, if men would heartily receive and practise it, a glorious peace and happiness would be diffused over the earth ; or, else, that he prophesies of some happy times, unknown yet, which future ages are to be blessed with. For the earth is, indeed, full of the knowledge of the Lord, in this sense, that the profession of christianity is very widely spread. There is opportunity enough for knowledge ; but there hath been yet but little of this universal charity seen, or felt, in the world. *The earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord ; and yet the wolf dwelleth not with the lamb ; nor doth the leopard lie down with the kid ; nor do the cow and the bear feed together ; nor doth the sucking child play upon the hole of the asp ; nor doth the weaned child put his hand upon the cockatrice den ; nor have these rapacious and terrible creatures left off to hurt or destroy in God’s holy mountain. Nor hath any thing of what was intended by this come to pass ; that is, men’s tempers have not been*

* Isaiah xi. 6—9.

universally tamed and subdued ; but the wild and wicked are still wild and wicked, still bite and devour the innocent ; and still a war is carried on amongst men.

Nay, for what appears, and for all those advances that have been hitherto made towards a firm union and a sincere and universal friendship amongst all men, every one of these figurative expressions of the prophet may be literally fulfilled, before an universal calmness reign through the earth. And the wolf, and the lion, and the leopard, and the bear, may sooner enter into terms of reconciliation and amity with the milder beasts and with mankind ; than the passionate and violent, the hurtful and venomous, the cruel and malicious part of mankind shall suffer themselves to be tamed and subdued into good nature and charity, or be bound up by any rules of quiet and harmony. But, though we see so little sign of this hitherto, yet we know that not a tittle of all that is spoken shall fail.

In the mean while, that it may be no objection against christianity itself, and no matter of scandal and offence to us, that it hath proved the occasion of so sharp swords and so much division upon earth, it becomes us to inquire, as I proposed,

II. Whether the Gospel itself be not wholly free from all the guilt of this great unhappiness ; or whether it be possible, with the least degree of justice, to attribute this to the doctrine, or design of

Jesus Christ ; to the nature or tendency of any thing contained in christianity. A very few words will suffice upon this head. For let any person, of never so little capacity, look into the account of our Saviour's life, his actions and his words, recorded in the Gospels ; or into the sermons and epistles and behaviour of his Apostles ; and see if they find, through the whole, any the least encouragement given, either by example or precept, to any, even the lowest degree of that temper of mind, or manner of deportment, which doth so much as border upon ill nature, or cruel usage of our fellow creatures.

Did not our Lord himself condescend to all the offices of love and beneficence to all the world of sinners about him ? Do not all his precepts, which respect human society, manifestly tend to the peace and quiet of it ? And would they not effectually procure and establish it, were they thoroughly attended to, and universally practised ? Doth not he command, upon pain of God's eternal displeasure against those who neglect it, the practice of all the peaceable and quiet virtues ; and forbid the harbouring the very thoughts and surmises, that may possibly tend to break in upon the happiness of the world about us ? Meekness, humility, condescension, forbearance, forgiveness, tenderness, and the like, are they not indispensably enjoined ? And the vices contrary to these, haughtiness, pride, revenge, unmercifulness, malice, and ill will, are they not strictly forbidden ;

their punishment declared to be certain and intolerable? They are forbidden, in all cases, and at all times. Nothing can ever justify them; nothing is supposed in the Gospel ever to excuse those who are guilty of them. Nay, love, and beneficence, and a readiness to be reconciled to our greatest and most violent enemies, are made the shining and distinguishing characters of a true christian. And could he, who came to institute such a religion, full of such precepts, and constantly recommending such sort of virtues above all others, be supposed to come on any other design, but to compose the jarring tempers and actions of men into concord and harmony? And can any one charge such a religion, that seems to be calculated in all its parts, chiefly for the planting, maintaining, and increasing peace and love in the world; can any one, I say, charge this religion with the guilt of those heats and dissensions, which it hath been by accident made the occasion of? No, it must be plain, beyond contradiction, to all who will look into it, that christianity itself hath not the least part in this guilt; but that we must seek for the true source and foundation of all this unhappiness somewhere else. This is what I now design, namely,

III. To consider, whence this great unhappiness hath truly proceeded, and where the guilt of it is justly to be fixed.

And, *First*. This unhappiness manifestly proceeded, in the first ages of the Gospel, from the prejudices and passions of the unbelieving world, both Jews and Gentiles. This I mention first, because the disturbance and disquiet that sprang from this original was first in order of time, commencing immediately with the Gospel itself; and was what our Lord chiefly respected in the text, which was spoken to the persons, who were themselves to be the first propagators of his religion and the first witnesses to this fatal consequence of it. A scene of violence and fury immediately attended the opening of the Gospel to the world. The preachers and propagators of it were persecuted beyond what had been known in the world before; and all the sincere professors of it hated by their very friends and relations, and pursued by all the evils of this world, and all that is terrible to flesh and blood. Indeed, this persecution and these dissensions had not happened in the world, if christianity had not been preached to the nations of it.

But shall not God do his part to the reforming and amending the world, because there are some in it that will make this very attempt of his an occasion of their growing worse? Shall not God send a divine person into the world to preach a pure and holy religion, full of charity, humility, and peace, because some will make this an opportunity of their increasing in fierceness and inhumanity? Had the

christian religion, indeed, given the unbelieving world any reason to be so incensed against it and so inhospitable to its professors, somewhat might be said in vindication of their practice, and some blame justly laid at the door of christianity. But wicked men raised this terrible scene of persecution against it, not because they had no reason to receive it, but because they would not. And they would not receive it, because it was against their interests, or their lusts, or their humours, to receive it. Not that it divested any of the magistrates of this world of their lawful authority, or dissolved the obligation of obedience in their subjects. Not that it concerned itself with the rights and privileges of kingdoms and civil societies ; or brake in upon the government, or discipline, of nations. Not that it tended in its nature to render society disagreeable ; to make men ill natured, or morose, or uncharitable, or unjust, or cruel, or hypocritical ; or recommended any thing to mankind contrary to the peace and quiet of the state. Nothing of this could be laid to its charge by its greatest adversaries.

But the truth of the case was this. They hated and derided it, because, if it had universally taken place, the follies and superstitions of their received forms of worship must have vanished, and the whole fabric of their forefathers' religion been shaken and ruined. Let a form of worship be never so tedious with pompous ceremonies, never so full of fop-

peries and ridiculous circumstances, never so unworthy of reasonable creatures to offer, or of God to receive ; yet there is I know not what fondness for it, riveted in the minds and affections of men, if it descended down to them from their forefathers, and can but plead age and prescription.

But perhaps christianity, with the evidence that at first accompanied it, might have got over this difficulty, and have borne down this blind and senseless veneration of antiquity. But this was not all it had to encounter. It opposed the passions, and lusts, and present worldly interests of men. The Jews saw, it condemned and opposed that course of sensuality and covetousness they were generally engaged in ; and that it put an end to their hopes of temporal prosperity, and fleshly pleasure, and triumphs over their enemies, under the reign of their Messiah. The great men of the world found it most opposite to the main design of their lives ; and irreconcilable with that ambition, and pride, and insatiable love of riches and grandeur, which they had entertained, and could not part with. A very small part of the world, as things went then, found any the least comfort or satisfaction in any of its proposals. These were the reasons why both Jews and Gentiles made it their business to crush it in its infancy ; and to persecute, even to death, the first preachers and professors of it ; because they carried such evidence along with them, in the miracles they

every where wrought, that they judged it must presently gain ground, if not thus heartily and inhumanly resisted. This is a plain account how it came to pass, that the christian religion was at first the occasion of much disturbance, and of bitter persecutions, in the world. And whether this proceeded from any thing blameable in itself, or from the unreasonable prejudices and deep-rooted vices of the unbelieving world, may be left to any one of common sense to judge.

Let us now turn our thoughts from the unbelieving to the believing world ; from the men, that persecuted christianity, to the men, that have embraced and do profess it. And, as we have before observed how much hatred and division, how many barbarities and persecutions, amongst christians themselves, have taken their rise from religion, and been founded on a sacred principle ; so let us now consider whence this unhappiness, amongst the disciples of the same master, hath proceeded, and from what root it hath sprung.

Secondly. Therefore it is very plain that much of this unhappiness hath proceeded from the projects, and designs, the ambition, or pride, or covetousness, of the wicked part of the christian world. Christianity never pretended to reform those, that are resolved to be wicked ; and no wonder that such as these, who have no conscience, and no principles of religion, when they have any of their own con-

trivances to bring to effect, make use of the properest means to accomplish them. They know that there is no better, nor more moving pretence, than the care of religion and the church of God ; and, therefore, this must be the engine to set forward their undertakings ; and their unhallowed lips must profane holy words, that these holy words may sanctify their unhallowed actions. Thus, for instance, if the bounds of power are to be enlarged beyond right and just ; if a number of men must be extirpated, banished, or depressed ; something in religion and the church is often brought in, to colour over the vile wickedness, to shelter it from scandal, and ripen it for success. If a prince's favourable smile be to be obtained for one sort of men, and his displeasure to be kindled against another ; it is often seen that nothing will more effectually do this, than some consideration taken from their difference in opinion, or practice, with relation to religion and the worship of God.

This method is frequently made use of by those, who mean nothing more than the compassing their own designs, the enlarging their own credit and interest, the ingratiating themselves with some whose favour may turn to good account. And so the peace of human society, the quiet of the world, and the satisfaction and contentment of their neighbours, are sacrificed, at all adventures, to their own private covetousness, or ambition, or pride, or revenge, or

some wicked humour or other. And, because nothing better can be pretended, religion must be drawn into the quarrel; whilst these men themselves, who are the forwardest to hide their designs under the mask of something holy, are of all others the most ready to reproach religion itself on this very account, and the first to object against it the many disturbances and disquiets it hath occasioned in the world.

It is indeed absurdly ridiculous, to hear men of notorious looseness, men of profane and atheistical conversations, solicitous about the honour of God; and to see how men, who have either never appeared at the public worship, or never appeared there with decency, can, upon occasion, conceive a mighty concern for the credit and beauty of it; how their breasts can labour with the heat of a pious zeal; and all their designs and endeavours, on a sudden, be directed to the maintaining and supporting the church of God. But this must be expected, we see plainly, whilst there are wicked and designing men, under the covert of the christian profession, in this world. For they that have selfish and unchristian designs, they that make no scruple of cherishing ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or revenge, will never make any scruple of using religion and the church, as instruments to promote the designs such tempers of mind will put them upon.

Add to this, *Thirdly*, that much of the unhappiness we are now speaking of, may have proceeded from

the passions, and weaknesses, and imprudences, of sincere christians; christians that truly design well, and desire to promote the honour of their master and their religion. A good christian will never indeed knowingly interpose in the promoting any design, or advancing any cause, to the destruction of the peace and quiet of the christian world; but a good christian is not always secure, or out of danger of being imposed upon, when this cause is varnished over and painted before his eyes, so as to appear quite another thing. Honest men are often led by knaves; and made the tools of those, whom they would abhor, if they knew their insides. They are often drawn in to give credit to a cause, which, without their presence, would not be tolerable; that so their example may be urged in defence of what wants better arguments.

Christianity doth not make men more discerning, or more learned in the wisdom of this world, than it finds them. But yet, it neither commands, nor disposes men to be cheated and imposed upon by every pretence. It doth not instruct them to put on an air of unconcernedness or indifference in what respects the happiness of mankind or the society they belong to; nor doth it educate them in stupidity, or a disregard of every thing but their own private devotion and piety. But, as it is far from sending them into deserts and solitudes, into places unfrequented by human society; as it chiefly commends to them the

practice of those virtues, that adorn conversation and make the world about them happy ; so it recommends to them somewhat of the wisdom and cunning of serpents, as well as the harmlessness and innocence of doves ; lest the wicked and designing part of the world should manage their innocence and simplicity to the mischief of others and the ruin of peace, and render their harmlessness as fatal in its influence upon the world, as if they were clothed with barbarity and cruelty. It is no advantageous part, therefore, of a good man's character, who is obliged to act in society, that he sees with other men's eyes, or hears with other men's ears ; or that he is, out of an affected negligence, or fond opinion of another's abilities, or want of resolution, led blindfold by others ; because he may often be surprised into things of very ill consequence ; and, when he little thinks of it, bring a scandal upon that religion he heartily loves, by an unwary helping to make it serve the purposes of hatred and division.

What I have said under these two last heads is, that there are wicked and designing men in the world, who will, if it be possible, contrive their designs so, as that religion and the church shall be drawn in, to bear no inconsiderable part in them ; and that there are good and pious men, who will not be at the pains to examine their designs thoroughly ; or who cannot see through all the colour they can lay upon them ; or who are too easily cheated and

alarmed by their pretences; and that upon these accounts it must so happen, that something in religion will be too often made the occasion of disorder, and uncharitableness, and dissensions, and persecutions, in the world of christians.

Bat, *Fourthly*, much of this unhappiness hath proceeded from men's not being contented with the simplicity of christianity, as it is to be found in the Gospels; from their making new creeds; their adding new articles of faith to those laid down in the New Testament; and laying new impositions upon the rest of christians, unknown to Christ and his Apostles. This I may safely affirm, that, had christians been always content with a mutual agreement in the fundamental doctrines of their religion, as they lie in the Gospel itself, and the indispensable obligation of the practice of all the duties commanded in it; much of this fatal consequence of it might have been hindered, and very much of the scandal redounding from it, have been prevented. But there hath ever been an itch, in some or other of power and authority, to alter the terms of love and concord settled by Christ, by framing some new character, and some fresh note of distinction, among christians; and this hath ever begot opposition and controversies, managed, on all sides, with aggravations and provocations; and this hath brought forth variances, and passion, and hatred, in the breasts of those who are sure to be condemned by their own

law for want of love and charity. And it ever so happens, as it hath been manifested by constant experience, that more violence, which hath now for many ages passed for zeal, that more violence, I say, is shown for these additions, and for these lesser and undetermined matters, in which the difference lies, than for the most fundamental points of faith, or the most necessary points of practice. In the practical duties, especially, men seem easy enough; and would fain have it thought, that the vilest and most enormous crimes are more tolerable in themselves, and more inoffensive and harmless to public society, than a difference in the least of their additions.

The greatest (I would to God I could say the *only*) instances of this, are to be seen where the Romish religion is spread. But we must not be so partial to ourselves, as to confine this observation to that church, or to such additions, or points not essential, as have been determined by it. I fear it will be found, that too many, who profess to have reformed from that church, still retain too much of the spirit of it, and too often make their own systems and notions the measure of their affections, and confine their cordial love and christian charity within the bounds of their own creed or manner of worship. It is certainly true, that there have not been greater hatreds, or more unchristian malice, amongst christians, than what have sprung from this root; and,

therefore, this unhappy consequence of christianity must be charged, in great part, upon those christians, who, not being content with the simplicity of christianity as they found it in the Gospel, have been perpetually making additions to it according to their own various opinions or designs.

Fifthly. Another consideration, near akin to this, is, that this unhappiness amongst christians hath chiefly proceeded from men's mistaking the nature and main design of christianity. Did men but understand and consider, that it was not the great design of the christian religion to make all the world of one opinion in things of little moment; but that it was revealed from heaven, chiefly to restore the worship of the *one Supreme God, in spirit and in truth; and to teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this world;* they could not act the part they so often do. Did men but consider, that the great branch of christian duty is love, and good nature, and humanity; and the distinguishing mark of a christian, an universal charity; they could not but own that Jesus Christ came to plant and propagate these in the world. And, then, they would abhor the thoughts of making any thing in his institution an engine of strife, and malice, and inhumanity. Then, they would not think all things lawful against those that differ from them, nor themselves obliged to crush and ruin them. Then, the contention between

men of various minds would not be, who should have the power of oppressing their brethren ; but the contest would be, who should love most, and who should give the most expressive demonstrations of an unconfined good nature and an unbounded charity. But these, I fear, are but dreams and wishes.

It would sound something strange, to say that the chief design of christianity is too plain to be understood, and too evident to be seen ; and yet it is true, that the very plainness of this makes it the less attended to. Such a love there is in men to something not so easy to be understood, nor of such importance ; and such a readiness to find out other designs of christianity, more agreeable to their own worldly projects.

Can any of all the fiery zealots in the world show us any design more worthy of the Son of God's descending from heaven, than the planting of love and peace on earth ? more beneficial to the whole race of mankind ; more for the ease and internal quiet of our own breasts ; or a better preparative for the calm and serene joys of heaven ; for the fruition of that God who is love, and of the company of those blessed spirits who are the witnesses and ministers of his love ? Can they show us any design more plainly revealed in the Gospel ; or any one duty there laid upon us, to which this must at any time give place ? If they cannot, then nothing can ever release us from our obligation to love and

charity ; or ever excuse the least degree of hatred, and malice, and violence ; much less of barbarity and cruelty. Nay, how can it possibly be thought by any christians, that a religion, which lays such stress upon peace and love, which dwells so eternally upon them ; which was founded in love, and so manifestly designed for the propagating and establishing good nature in the world ; how can it be imagined, that there is any thing in this religion, that can give them occasion to hate, or disturb, or persecute, any of their brethren ? Unless they can think that itself is so framed as to destroy its own design ; to oppose its own main end and purpose ; and to dissolve the obligations of its own precepts. These things are inconsistent, and too absurd to be fastened upon Jesus Christ by any who believe him sent of God. And, would men seriously attend to the design of the Gospel, they could not fix such absurdities upon it ; religion would be free from the scandal of being the occasion of hatred, and disturbance, and persecution, amongst men ; and the world would be free from the trouble and plague of them ; society would be happy, and God would be glorified, in the universal practice of love and peace.

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1823.

A
COLLECTION
OF
ESSAYS AND TRACTS
IN
THEOLOGY.

VOL. I.

A
COLLECTION
OF
ESSAYS AND TRACTS
IN
THEOLOGY,
FROM VARIOUS AUTHORS,
WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL NOTICES.

BY JARED SPARKS.

VOL. I.

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TO
THE REVEREND
JOHN THORNTON KIRKLAND,
D. D. LL. D.
PRESIDENT OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY,
AND
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES,
THIS
COLLECTION OF ESSAYS AND TRACTS,
DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE CAUSE
OF
SACRED LEARNING, OF TRUTH AND CHARITY, OF RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM, AND RATIONAL PIETY,
IS INSCRIBED,
AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE,
AFFECTIONATE REGARD, AND RESPECT,
BY HIS MOST OBLIGED,
AND MOST HUMBLE SERVANT,
THE EDITOR.

PREFACE.

SINCE the commencement of the Reformation, books have been multiplied to a very great extent in almost every department of theology. No science has laid a heavier tax on the industry of the learned, or contributed more to fill the shelves of libraries. The Scriptures have been examined, and their meaning illustrated, by all the aids which talents and erudition could command. Philology, criticism, rhetoric, logic, and, indeed, all the arts of defining language and analyzing thought, have been employed to establish the foundation and ornament the structure of theology.

In a science, which runs so far into the deep and uncertain things of metaphysics, and which allows so wide a range for the imagination, it is no wonder, that much should be written, which is neither calculated to instruct the plain inquirer, nor edify the practical christian. It is no wonder, that reason should sometimes be misled, the judgment perverted, and truth obscured. The topics of theological discussion are exhaustless, and christians of every form

of belief have applied themselves with equal zeal, if not with equal ability, to the task of developing and enforcing their peculiar sentiments. The consequence has been, that the labours of many great and wise men are now useless to the world. Lives have been passed in decorating gaudy and unsubstantial theories, or wasted in the barren fields of metaphysical controversy, or idly expended in the wild dreams of enthusiasm.

From general causes like these, and from others of a particular and local nature, theology has too often been rendered cumbersome, unintelligible, and unprofitable. But after all, amidst a prodigious waste of intellect and labour, some treasures remain worthy of the great minds, which bequeathed them to posterity, worthy of the religion of Jesus, and worthy to be studied and admired by every sincere believer. Among the numerous works on theological subjects, a few may be found, which have an intrinsic value distinct from the speculative opinions contained in them, and from the dogmas, which it may be their primary or subordinate object to inculcate. Practical religion is the same every where, and with all persons. Truth is uniformly the same, and so are the principles of human nature, of reason, and of conscience. Wise and enlightened men, however they may differ on points of speculation, will think nearly alike on all that is fundamental or important in religion, when they submit to be guided by their understanding.

In forming the present Collection of Essays and Tracts in Theology, it is the purpose of the Editor to select such articles from different writers, as in some degree at least bear this uniformity of character. Neither the particular tenets entertained by any author, nor the sect with which it may have been his pleasure to associate himself, will be taken into consideration. The only undeviating rule of selection will be, that every article chosen shall be marked with rational and liberal views of christianity, and suited to inform the mind, or improve the temper and practice. Nothing will be introduced, which violates the protestant principles of christian liberty, free inquiry, toleration, and the exercise of private judgment in all the concerns of religion. If there be a right more sacred than any other, it is that, which gives every man an unlimited control over the operations of his own mind, especially in those inquiries, for the result of which he is accountable only to God.

The work will be composed chiefly of pieces from English authors. Many articles of merit, written by men distinguished for learning and piety, have become rare, and are not to be obtained without difficulty. They are either concealed in voluminous works, or their fame is passed away with the memory of the events in which they originated. Bishop Watson's excellent Collection of Tracts has done much to rescue some treatises of this descrip-

tion from the state of unmerited forgetfulness into which they were falling. But his plan was widely different from the one here contemplated. It was his aim to form several treatises into a methodical arrangement, in such a manner that together they should constitute a general system of divinity. In pursuance of this design he took into his collection some elaborate works, and he was therefore limited in number and variety. The plan here instituted allows a greater latitude, and will enable the Editor to receive from any quarter whatever is deemed valuable.

Some persons, who have assumed the liberty to think for themselves, have written with a freedom and independence on religious subjects, which have not always been acceptable to those of a more timid spirit and yielding temperament. Men of the first eminence, and of unblemished character, have deviated from the common track, and dared to make their way by the light of reason and the Scriptures, preferring the simple instructions and commands of Christ to the intricacies of human creeds and systems. They have believed with Paley, that "whatever makes religion more rational, makes it more credible;" and with Young, that "when faith is virtue, reason makes it so." It is not surprising, that such men should not think in the same train as those, who adopt the enthusiast's short rule of believing a thing, because it is

impossible, or who look upon mysteries as constituting essential parts of a christian's faith.

It is a maxim, as true in religion as in every thing else, that opinions are as various as men. *Quot homines tot sententiæ.* These opinions some christians are fond of dividing out into two classes, under the general heads of orthodox and heterodox. A classification so arbitrary, one would think, ought to be made on the most exact and rigid principles; but, when we come to the reality, nothing is more loose and indefinite. It was a correct saying of Locke, that "every man is orthodox to himself;" and hence every one may range in the class of heterodoxy all opinions which do not agree with his own. In some cases a majority have harmonized so far, as to assent to general formularies and confessions, and then whoever followed them was orthodox to all the rest, and whoever refused to follow was heterodox to the same extent.

It has happened, nevertheless, that among these dissenters from established creeds have been some of the greatest and best men, who have adorned the christian church. Their writings have done much to establish the truth, authority, and consistency of the Scriptures, and to fix just rules of criticism and interpretation; they have done much to recommend christianity by proving its simple and divine character, and to encourage religious practice by founding it on its proper basis of charity, toleration, and

personal goodness. There is no reason why a name or an opinion, the narrowness of bigotry or the tide of popular prejudice, should exclude such writings from the publicity to which their merits give them a claim, or from the good influence, which they are eminently qualified to exercise.

It is intended not only to draw from the best English authors, but also to translate occasionally from divines, who have written in Latin, German, or French. Several valuable articles may, it is thought, be obtained from these sources, which have never been presented to the English reader. Something, no doubt, may be gleaned from the first Reformers sufficiently free from the spirit, and violence, and jargon of those times, to be read with interest and profit at the present day. Whenever christians have been attacked as avowing an erroneous faith, they have defended themselves in nearly the same way. Equally indignant at oppression, they have asserted the right of inquiry, judgment, and belief, with equal earnestness and sound reasoning. They have usually maintained the true principles of scriptural christianity.

Even Calvin, in his expostulation with the king of France, was moved to plead the cause of liberty and toleration most eloquently, while he was suffering in exile under the odium of being a heretic. So it was with Luther, Melancthon, and their associates. When defending themselves against the common

adversary, they took rational grounds. It was only on things of doubtful import, that they became enthusiasts, bigots, dogmatists, and persecutors. They deserted reason, and then reason deserted them. When they attempted to enforce what they could neither explain nor understand, they quarrelled, became furious, called names, excommunicated, anathematized. With the voluminous repositories of these feuds, we have no occasion to be acquainted; yet we may still listen with pleasure and advantage to the eloquence and arguments of the first Reformers, in support of the common principles of religious truth and liberty.

Some good articles in theology are moreover contained in the writings of the Polish Brethren. For ability and learning they have never been surpassed; but it is to be regretted, that so large a portion of their works is taken up in discussing the abstruser points of controversy, and that they were so much addicted to the school dialectics in use at the time in which they wrote. This objection, however, does not apply to their commentaries, which are perspicuous and natural, and manifest great critical acumen and sound judgment. They have served as a storehouse from which all sects and parties have drawn with more freedom, than they have found it convenient to acknowledge. Few commentaries on the Scriptures have appeared during the last century, which have not profited either directly or indirectly

from these sources. Orthodox and heterodox have been equally dependant, and equally cautious how they gave credit, where credit was due. Archbishop Tillotson was more ingenuous ; but he paid dearly for his honesty and frankness, by being branded as a heretic and a Socinian. Many were ready to inflict this censure, who were not ashamed to be plagiarists and pilferers. But the time has happily come, when names have lost their terror, and a man may confess without fear through what channels he receives knowledge and truth.

The celebrated theologians among the early Arminians, such as Grotius, Episcopius, Wetstein, Le Clerc, and Limborch, were the authors of valuable works, founded on the broad principles of a liberal and rational faith. Of these writers, perhaps, a few pieces may be published, which will afford light and assistance to inquirers at the present day. Le Clerc, especially, among other works of formidable magnitude, has left several short treatises, which bear testimony to his piety, learning, and genius, as well as to his enlargement of mind and charitable spirit. The Arminians, like the first Reformers, wrote in self defence. They maintained the liberty of conscience, and used the weapons furnished by reason and the Scriptures. The Calvinists had combated the Catholics with the same weapons, but they were now grown strong, and came down upon the defenceless Remonstrants with the artillery of creeds and

confessions, synods and councils, imprisonment and civil penalties. Having no means of physical resistance, the Remonstrants relied on their intellectual strength and the justice of their cause. In this respect they gained a conquest as complete and honourable, as it was on the other part ignoble and unchristian. Their works written on this occasion, and afterwards, contain excellent specimens of theological discussion and criticism, which are in strict conformity with the spirit and original simplicity of the Gospel.

In drawing from so large a number of writers, whose opinions were various, it cannot be expected, that a perfect consistency will be preserved in the religious sentiments advanced in different parts of this work. Much less can it be supposed, that the Editor's opinions accord with all that may be published. It will be a general rule to give the articles entire, nor will an alteration or abridgment of them ever be made in consequence of the sentiments, which they express. Sometimes such parts may be omitted, as are local, and have no immediate bearing on the subject at large; but this will seldom happen, and never unless it be notified to the reader. It is deemed highly important that the language of the authors should be faithfully and exactly retained.

The Editor will endeavour to comprise, in the biographical and critical notices, such incidents and facts, as may add to the interest and value of the

work. Suitable remarks will be annexed for explaining the object of each article, and for making its purport and meaning clearly understood. If any topic should be introduced, which, in the progress of theological science, has received new light since the article was written, an attempt may perhaps be made to bring the subject down to the present state of knowledge. In short, if proper discretion be exercised in selecting articles, and the plan here proposed be judiciously executed, it is confidently believed, that the work will be an acceptable and useful acquisition to the libraries not only of theologians and biblical students, but of every class of readers.

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* * It was at first contemplated to add an Index to each volume separately. But, as it is supposed that the work will be extended through several volumes, it is thought preferable to have a copious index of the whole in the last volume.